MEDICINE GOLD

WARREN · H · MILLER

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MEDICINE GOLD

THE FURIOUS PACE WAS SETTING EVERY ONE'S NERVES TINGLING WITH EXCITEMENT

[Page 84]

MEDICINE GOLD

BY

WARREN H. MILLER

AUTHOR OF "THE RING-NECKED GRIZZLY," "THE BLACK PANTHER OF THE NAVAHO," ETC.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK :: 1924 :: LONDON

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MAR 11 '24
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MEDICINE GOLD

CHAPTER I

THE LOCKET OF ST. DIÉ

IT was with a grin of amused derision that Bob Colquitt viewed those three growing mounds of duffel on the dock at Roberval. The canoes in which they were to go were moored alongside the rude log float, while their guide, John Charley Nishimi-wog, bent over one of them, adjusting with the skill of the native canoeman the balance of four heavy side-opening duffel bags full of provisions against the solid immovability of a leather military trunk belonging to His Lordship.

Dividing up the duffel, setting apart what *has* to be taken on a long trip into the wilderness from what is merely an essential in its owner's private opinion, is the first real crisis

in any expedition. It laid bare the human nature of every person on it, Bob perceived as he watched, with a deal of covert amusement, the Trojans wrangling over those three duffel piles, as to what was and what was not going to be left behind. Each man of them was now fighting for the article of diet most dear to his own stomach, for the bit of camp gear that had become his personal fetish—the one thing he was sure he could not be happy without, while Bob checked off essentials unmoved by their howls of wrath and dismay.

He loved the Trojans, every chum of them; loved their foibles, their boisterous humor, their devastating sarcasm, pointed as a fish-hook and delicate as a paddle butt; loved their unfailing cheerfulness by camp and trail. It was because he was the only silent one among them, Bob believed, that they had tacitly chosen him for their leader. He never said much, but his simple, "Yes," or "No," generally decided things and ended all talk.

But there was divertingly enough of that

now: "I say, ye know!" His Lordship was beseeching as His Lordship's extensive collection of toilet articles was being fairly torn from His Lordship's protesting fingers, "I *must* take these, boys—one cawn't pig it, my word!"

"Don't be a frabjous ass, Lord Jim—everything's *got* to go in just those three canoes!" expostulated Ajax, passing over His Lordship's heavy manicure set to Diomed, who had charge of the pile that was to be left behind at Roberval. He looked to Bob, who nodded silent approval, and Diomed set aside a fascinating but heavy tent wall pocket full of soaps and bottles amid further howls from Lord Jim. Then Ajax himself burst into yells of protest, for John Charley Nishimiwog had turned from the canoes to set aside a five-gallon jug of maple sirup on the discard pile.

"One was plainty," pronounced the Indian guide with a shrug of finality, and went on packing the canoes.

Bob watched the bare essentials going aboard with growing apprehension. Checking them off so that nothing vital would be left behind, still these soaring piles of duffel that *had* to go kept on increasing. Every pound of it would have to be back-packed over the unknown trails and portaged around the roaring cataracts of northern Quebec. Lakes would have to be crossed where an inch too much loading meant a swamped canoe. The silent youth began to realize the seriousness of this trip and his need for hard and quiet thinking before they should cut loose from civilization entirely. His Lordship, boyish himself and but little older than the rest of them, would play a hundred-to-one shot either way and win or lose with equal nonchalance—but to win in this wilderness of North Canada was Life and to lose was Death. Of the Trojan Club, Ajax and Diomed were "husks," glorying in their strength, rash and impetuous, with all the violence of headstrong natures. Ulysses, the crafty, could be depended on for

schemes and expedients, but he was such a woolgatherer as to be sure to go mooning off and lose himself on the first blazed trail. Bob felt that he and his bosom chum, the slender and idealistic Patroclus, were the sole two who saw things in the larger realities of common sense, who realized that such a thing as a death in the party through some rash foolishness would end the whole trip in gloom and failure.

It was a great club, the Trojans. It had had its inception in the thrilling pages of Homer, when the boys had been struggling through their Iliads together. Mr. Clayton, the tutor of this group of South Carolina plantation boys, had made them see not only the superficial glories of the Siege of Troy but its deeper significance in the universal types of human nature which that story reveals. It was with surprised delight then, that, right in their own gang, the Trojans found that they could pick out their own George Galt, "Fighter" Galt, for the im-

petuous and headstrong Diomed who was not afraid of Mars himself; their own Sam Armstrong, of Beaufort Plantation, as the huge and immovable Ajax; and Kenyon Adams, the lanky and freckled son of Kingston Plantation, a youth with shrewd, slanting black eyes and keen, foxlike face, for the crafty Ulysses. Then there was Bob's bosom friend, Craig Boylston of Gadsden, slender, handsome, silver-tongued, who naturally took the name of Patroclus, beloved of all the Trojans. Finally there was Bob himself, Camp Boss, their leader, the peerless Achilles.

The Trojans were a hunting, fishing, and exploring club. They went on long trips together during the holidays; they pooled their tents, canoes, grub and ammunition, and lent each other guns and tackle if any had need. When away from home on trips in the woods they called each other by the names of their Greek heroes, and they tried to live up to the ideals of those heroes, too—not a bad business for any youth to set before him! It

was when on these camping trips that they dropped their own Christian names entirely, preferring the Greek ones or nicknames derived from them, and so we must call them throughout this story. Bob was the only one who still kept his own name—probably because it had been found impossible to get a nickname out of "Achilles."

This present trip was at the invitation of His Lordship to go hunting and fishing with him in Quebec, for ouananiche and trout, for moose and caribou. The young Englishman had been a globe-trotter and big-game hunter from his boyhood days. He had lived in many of the British colonial possessions, and before he was eighteen had been a civil administrator in the hills of Ceylon.

Tall, slender, sunburned, now sporting a wisp of a mustache that the Trojans secretly envied, Lord Jim was a scion of the great house of the St. Dié's. In present-day England they are wholesale buyers of raw cotton, and it had been his visit to South

Carolina on business that had ended in their all taking this Quebec hunting trip together. The affair had had that casual suddenness of most of the Trojan Club trips—a proposal from Lord Jim, a hasty assemblage of rifles and duffel, a wire to John Charley at Roberval engaging him and his partner Etienne Bissette; then two days on the Rilleram and a day up from Quebec found them decanted at Roberval with all their duffel and John Charley awaiting them with many grins.

John Charley Nishimi-wog finally looked up from the canoes with a grunt of approval. He had performed the miracle of loading them, somehow, and was now ready for more thrilling matters. Out of a pail of shiners he grabbed one lively and squirming victim and threaded him carefully on His Lordship's hook. The act reminded the Trojans that thus far they had not given their own fishing tackle a thought and that the ouananiche were right here in Lake St. John waiting for them. A simultaneous rush was made

for rod cases. As they were to learn the rudiments of North country woodcraft at the knee of John Charley Nishimi-wog—whose name Ulysses had declared must be some kind of a college football yell—they imitated him now as he tied a stout, three-foot gut leader on the end of His Lordship's line, added a light sinker and then a No. 6 snelled hook with the shiner threaded on it, hooked through the gills and under the dorsal fin. Then, with rods dangling precariously overside and the Trojans seating themselves wobbily on their several war bags, the canoes set forth, leaving the bare and rude semi-civilization of Roberval behind and paddling up the west shore of Lake St. John.

"*Alors,* Messieurs, mak' it hard de paddle!" said John Charley. "We mak' dat lob-stick, for peek up my partner, Etienne Bissette, by'mby."

He pointed to where, far up the shore, land jutted out, on which grew a tall spruce, its branches fantastically lopped. It marked

the mouth of the Ouiatchousn River where their trip up to the headwaters of the Rocher River—the moose and caribou country, the land of the Montaignais Indians—would begin.

As they approached the lob-stick, a long birchbark canoe shot out from the point. In it were two paddlers; the one who paddled stern, thickset and stodgy, clad in a gorgeous green and red striped shirt, with a gaudy blue silk sash around the thick waist of him; the other, slender and girlish in figure, who sat at bow. The latter wore a red checked Mackinaw coat, a rakish hat of the same material, set off with a saucy cockade of red and white feathers, and the flap of it was pinned up jauntily. Girl or boy, they could not make out which.

"My word!" frowned His Lordship, looking around at the others, "this was not in the agreement at all, ye know! Fawncy Etienne presuming to bring another person without saying anything to us about it! Can it

be by any chawnce his wife, John Charley?"

"No, heem waf was come dead long tam ago, M'sieu. I t'ink eet was hees boy, Antoine. For why, I know not."

The Trojans looked at the approaching canoe a bit hostilely. An extra person, in a party already made up, is a fearsome thing on a camping trip! Nowhere else, they knew, is the human soul so laid bare as in the woods; nowhere else can one uncongenial, selfish or crochety spirit do so much to spoil the sport of a whole party. And—if it should be a girl! Their hearts sank—she would have to be the real thing to stand such a rough trip as this!

Etienne's canoe swept rapidly down to them: *"Bo' jou', Bo' jou',* M'sieus!" the *habitant* grinned broadly, his gleaming teeth shining under a heavy black mustache.

"Bo' jou', Etienne!—*Bo jou',* Antoine!" grunted John Charley Nishimi-wog, nodding to the small person in the bow.

The Trojans breathed freer; at least it wasn't a girl, for their Indian had called him

"Antoine." They eyed the approaching canoe, comparing Etienne and Nishimi-wog. Wild looking as the French-Canadian was, there were subtle differences proclaiming the still more abysmal savagery of their Montaignais Indian guide, Nishimi-wog. Etienne wore a disreputable old slouch hat; Nishimi-wog was hatless, a regrettable halo of coarse black hair done into a sort of porcupine effect being merely tied in by a dirty bandanna about his forehead. Etienne was resplendent in that shouting striped shirt; Nishimi-wog went him one better with a scarlet stag blouse which made a violent dot of color on the blue and green of the landscape.

The Trojans looked curiously at the *habitant* boy, Antoine, in the bow. His was a wild and woodwise little face, a wilderness faun, with innumerable freckles on a piquant nose.

Slanting black eyes that reminded them somehow of those of the Canada lynx. The beauty and girlishness of his appearance, Bob noted, was due to the perfect cupid's-bow of

a mouth and Antoine's rather delicate French nose. But there was a lot to be learned from this wood-faun of a boy, they decided—also they meant to like him, unless he should turn out impossible. Antoine, they next perceived, wore a large gold locket pendant on his chest. Girlish, at first blush, thought the Trojans with a sniff of disdain; but no, for it was customary for the *habitants* to lavish extravagance in ornament and dress on their children and this Etienne was evidently no exception with his Antoine.

Etienne introduced him: "Mah boy, Antoine, M'sieus!" he announced as the youth nodded shyly. Then, explanatorily to His Lordship: "Moos be dat I take heem 'long to St. Césare wid me! Injun-man was try steal dat Nagushwa again las' night. Heem come dead. Mooch troub'—Nagushwa, he keel dat Injun."

His Lordship and the Trojans could make nothing of that, but John Charley grunted excitedly: "Nagushwa!—Keel mans?—De

Montaignais was stole heem 'gain?—Hein?—Who was come dead?" he asked.

"Dat Montaignais buck, Tawbisnay—you know heem?" replied Etienne.

The Trojans looked at Nishimi-wog questioningly. John Charley raised his finger and pointed to the large gold locket pendant on young Antoine's chest. "Nagushwa—Medicine Gold, Lord Jeem," he pronounced. "Ugh! Mooch beeg mysterrie! Keel Montaignais when heem was stole of it!"

"Fawncy!" ejaculated His Lordship, astonished, "no end of a gewgaw, what!"

The two canoes were close alongside now, and he reached over and examined the locket curiously. On it the Trojans saw faintly engraved the letters, "St. Dié." It was now His Lordship's turn to become amazed. "I say, y'know!" he exclaimed. "My own initials! —Odd, that—isn't it?" he asked them all. "But there were Canadian St. Dié's here in Roberval's time—that I know!"

"Dat hol' locket, heem was called de Locket

of St. Dié," volunteered Etienne. "An' dat's your name too, M'sieu?—*Hein*? Cur'ous, dat was! Dat all I know 'bout dis Nagushwa, M'sieu. De Injuns was all tam try to stole heem, and dey was all come dead of it. Heem was be long tam in ma familee. Ma modder, he was wear heem; ma grosmaman—all de Bissettes."

"You don't tell me," ejaculated His Lordship. "St. Dié's *my* name, you know—James Neville St. Dié. Fawncy still finding a bit of jewelry here in these backwoods that is called after our name. Is it very old, Etienne?"

"Ver' old, two, t'ree hondred year, mebbe," said the *habitant* guide. "De Curé at St. Césare, he was tol' you all 'bout dat Nagushwa. He know! We take heem back dere, now. Injun was try steal heem too mooch. Montaignais, Naskapi, all want heem. One buck was coom into ma house in St. Prime las' week. We find heem nex' mornin', dead—an' dat Nagushwa in hees hand of it."

"Most extraordinary!—How, dead?" asked His Lordship interestedly.

"Show de M'sieu, Antoine," ordered Etienne.

The boy pressed the catch of the cover of the locket and held it up for them to see. Inside was a rounded inner cover of polished gold, with a small knob to one side. Engraved on it in fine letters in old French script: *"Qui m'ouvert mourit!"* A. M. D. G. —"He who opens me dies!" read his Lordship translating for the benefit of the others. "My word!—" He began to fumble curiously at the small knob, but Antoine snatched the locket away.

"Ah, non, M'sieu! No touch!—It is death!"

"Nonsense, my dear boy!" began His Lordship, incredulously, seeking to recover the locket again and go on experimenting, but Etienne interposed.

Sacre! Non, Lord Jeem;" he protested, "de Injun, heem was no can read, so he all

come dead when he try open dat locket. Me, I'll mooch 'fred of heem! I geev heem back to de Curé at St. Césare dis trip."

John Charley Nishimi-wog grunted suddenly, an eager sound as if he too had something to contribute: "Nagushwa, heem beeg Medicine for de Montaignais lands, ol' chief-man say."

Bob turned to him with interest at that news. The Silent One had been listening and thinking while the others were speculating idly about this locket. It had seemed to him that Antoine and his locket introduced a good deal more into their trip beside the mere taking him along to St. Césare as a helper to his father. But John Charley had contributed the motive for these curious thefts by both Montaignais and Naskapi—land, possession of their hunting grounds. It had been guaranteed them, once for all, by Frontenac's deed, all Canada knew that; but who knew what might have been done during the earlier times of Roberval, when gentlemen adventurers

came to New France and were given lands right and left? This old locket held a mystery which the Indians knew but the whites did not, that was evident. But it was also protected from being opened by that sinister legend. No *habitant* dared try it; the words and the Jesuit signature were enough for them. The unlettered Red Man received no warning from that inscription but tried to open the locket by its knob. Result, death, immediate and instantaneous.

A fascinating mystery, Bob reflected. So long as the boy Antoine was with them, their party would be mixed up in it unavoidably. Well, so be it! This wood-wise *habitant* boy would be decidedly an addition to their party, he felt, and, if there were further developments with the Indians because of the locket, their numbers would be a vast help to Etienne, the father. Bob's nature revolted at the idea of turning them both away because of Antoine, who was not in the agreement, and proceeded to speak his mind.

"I move we take Antoine with us, Lord Jim," he said. "If the queer jewel is really a danger to him he can count on us. How about it, boys?"

"Quite all right," said Lord Jim hastily. "I've an interest in the thing myself, rather! There *was* a French St. Dié, y' see. We'll have to see it through for them, shawn't we?" he laughed genially.

The Trojans agreed with yelps of tumultuous approval. What had promised to be just a fish-and-game trip now had a tight little mystery all its own, and if there was a fat row ahead in the Indian country to the north where they were going, so much the better! So Ulysses was now transferred, with a lot of the duffel, to Etienne's big birchbark, and then the whole fleet drove in their paddles for a distant point up the lake with a tall spruce lobstick standing sentinel on it and marking the first carry up the falls of the Ouiatchouan.

CHAPTER II

THE THIEF

THERE is an exhilaration in the utter freedom of the outdoors which is unmatched in its capacity to drive away care. In ten minutes from the time the canoes started on, the sinister Nagushwa and all it might bring of peril and danger was completely forgotten as the Trojans whooped and sang, racing each other with diabolical purpose to get one canoe forged sufficiently ahead of the other so as to let its bowman thrust the other canoe back with a shove of his paddle. In each, amidships, jutted out two rods, bowed in long and slender arcs, trolling for ouananiche, landlocked salmon, with the luckless shiners. The rest caroled as they drove in their paddles and hurled jocular abuse across at the neighboring canoes.

Then Lord Jim had a bite. Bob heard a fierce and excited exclamation from him and turned at bow to see his rod doubled up in a quivering bow while His Lordship thumbed the reel masterfully. Then, *Zeeeee!* That salmon was not to be denied! The reel screeched as he took out line; presently he broke water, a gleaming arc of silver, a glory of strength and beauty.

"Topping! Oh, topping!" burbled His Lordship. "Down with you, sir!" He dipped the rod tip strongly. The salmon dove to depths unknown while the taut line zipped through the water, throwing up a small spurt of white in its course. Again he broke; one, two, three prodigious leaps in a row, while the Trojans howled advice and encouragement.

"Oh, rippin'!" gasped Lord Jim. "Just what I came for, Bob!" He snubbed the salmon sharply, putting him down for a tour around the canoe. The yells had suddenly shut off from Etienne's canoe, and Bob saw Ulysses hooked into another one and fighting

him for his life. With two of the great landlocked beauties shooting off piscatorial fireworks at once, life was tolerably interesting around those four canoes! Bob felt that he could love this country as well as his own beloved southland. The joy of it, he analyzed, lay in its entire freedom from the machinery of civilization. You had your home and your food with you; also your transportation; all the things one bought with money at home. Here one depended alone on muscle power and wits. Nature was right close, beautiful, bountiful, unspoiled, free with her gifts to those who knew, niggardly to the slothful and awkward. A man's country, this! Aside from the staple cereals and roots, you needed but rod and rifle, plus skill, to live bountifully. Lord Jim, now: that was their dinner that he and Ulysses had on the ends of those slender lines. A spacious dinner, of juicy red meat that would be broiled over a fire of yellow birch coals, and, best of all, won from Nature by their own right hands.

"Now, M'sieu!" grunted John Charley, leaning far out with the landing net. Lord Jim guided the yard of gleaming silver down there in the water head first into the net. The Indian lifted him with a prodigious splash—a great ouananiche, full of fight as ever, outwitted by man's skill and cunning. Yells went up from the other canoes; then more howls as Etienne, not to be outdone, nearly upset his birchbark in the effort to land Ulysses' amateurly played fish. He squirmed out of the net amid derisive catcalls from Ajax and Diomed, who were both jealous, but Ulysses kept his head and played him back to the boat again.

This time Etienne, helped by Antoine's skillful paddle, netted the salmon handily and then there were eight pounds of fresh meat in camp and nine men to eat it!

"Bah gosh, suh!" crowed Etienne, "when you eat heem you wish de whole worl' was ouananiche an' you in de middly of heem to eat you' way out!"

John Charley grinned saturninely and drove his paddle in to lead the way to the Ouiatchouan portage. Its lob-sticked spruce was not a mile off now, a tall and pyramidal tree with half its branches cut off part way up, so as to mark it unmistakably from a distance. Portages, caches, trap-line heads and trail-gaps are all marked that way in the North. The lob-stick always means something important.

They landed in the bay and immediately negotiated the portage. Up around the bridal veil of the falls of the Ouiatchouan a zigzag trail led up to the lumber dam at the head. The husks, Ajax and Diomed, simply perishing to show off their strength, loaded tons of duffel on their backs and then heaved the canoe up over their heads and started off, whooping like Piutes. There was a whole lot of steam to let off yet before the wilderness could tame them to its smooth, deadly quiet! John Charley grinned sardonically and proceeded to pile upon himself everything that His Lordship had thought of taking.

"Me no good. Old man! Was only carry t'ree hondred pounds now," he informed Lord Jim. "When a yo'ng feller, tote six hondred!"

"Really!" ejaculated His Lordship. "Well, Bob, pick up the boat and let's get on with it!"

They followed the mountain of duffel that was John Charley Nishimi-wog climbing up the trail. Behind them came Etienne and the long and picturesque birchbark; then the rest of the Trojans with their gleaming and varnished wooden Peterboros. Up at the lumber dam, high above the lake now, they reloaded the canoes and started off up a still and placid backwater, avenued with straight and raggly black spruces, singing with the notes of the Canada white-throat and the veery thrush. The Ouiatchouan was a dear little river; beauty, solid beauty, every furlong of it! Spicy air, filled with the tang of spruce and balsam, sharp with the bracing exhilaration of the North, that made one feel resplendently alive. Presently the backwater ended in shal-

lows where they all got out and waded; then a baby waterfall where the canoes were hauled around through the brush. A hilarious crowd of voyageurs were the Trojans now, sarcastic and inconsiderate as ever, but all in good nature, in the joy of strong muscles well tried, the joy of hard, sweating work.

Came another still reach, with worth-while scenery strung along both banks, and deer and moose splashing out of the lily pads at their approach. Then a lake forest of dead trees, after which the Ouiatchouan narrowed down to five feet, degenerated to a mere ditch, petered out into a rivulet, ran up a mossy cliff, and ended in a spring!

"How long is the portage to Loon Lake, Etienne?" asked Bob, realizing that there was nothing much further to be said for the Ouiatchouan.

"Oh, quite leetle walk. Mebbe t'ree mile—sure 'bout dat," answered Nishimi-wog for him, for Etienne was hiding a face covered with reticent grins.

Alas for the Trojans! That "quite leetle walk" was the most diabolical of trails! It climbed up a mountain composed entirely of bowlders the size of a hencoop, a mile of it, a purple mile of red-faced, sweating energy, where you slipped on moss and cascaded down into fissures of hard granite with the canoe atop of your protesting frame; a diabolical mile on which perspiration and duffel alike were shed in assorted collections of canteens, coats, toilet articles, socks, towels, hairbrushes, landing nets and trout creels. The husks were done in. His Lordship, indomitable but by no means unbreathed, arrived at the top with his poor tousled head all streaks of wet hair and nothing to say but, "My word!" John Charley smiled like a gargoyle on the silent and spent Trojans at the summit, and he and Etienne and Antoine, who had the stamina of the North, went back to collect all that impedimenta without a comment save, "Dees was de best part of eet, M'sieus!"

When they came back those salmon were

cooked and ravenously downed. Subdued but still fighting game, the Trojans pitched down into the swamp below that ridge. We draw the veil of charity over that swamp! Five muddy and torn and bedraggled voyageurs toiled their way out of it at last and hit the hard path downhill through the forest with huge sighs of relief. The steady thump, thump of moccasined feet now made the sole sound to break the silvery quiet of the woodland, dripping with the soft warble of birds. The Trojans were dog-tired and longed for rest. A hundred paces, then rest sticks, stout saplings six feet long, were set up under the canoes while the bowman stood out from under and held the thing from toppling over while the stern man thankfully put down his end on the trail and mopped his forehead.

Came a gleam of white waters down below through the trees. A feeble shout went up from all the Club. Loon Lake at last! Into a grassy landing spot the trail led, and every one threw himself down in a posture of

utter exhaustion. Half an hour of that, and Ulysses, the Brains, as they called him, suggested a swim. Howls of approval. Five naked humans disported themselves in the clear and cold waters while trout rose to dimple the mirror of the lake.

That revived every one, and soon the busy hum of putting up tents, the stroke of axes in the forest, the clink of pails and cooking gear, made the spot home for them all. Diomed and Ajax got out their rifles and went with John Charley to watch a backwater for deer. Patroclus, with his strong home-body instincts, busied himself in fixing up his and Bob's tent so that it was the first of them all to look like a human habitation. Ulysses and Lord Jim jointed up their trout rods and shoved out on the lake in one of the canoes.

Bob sat and dreamed. To him this was the cream of all the outdoors, just to sit and look out over a great wild expanse like this lake, the home of innumerable wild creatures, the domain of the red Indian, Nature's kingdom,

every rod of it replete with interest. Birds attracted the eye, and he identified the species, some of them old winter friends of his at home, now in their summer nesting places. The trees received his scrutiny—balsam, spruce, pine, larch; the ubiquitous white canoe birches, the curly yellow ones good for firewood, the quaking aspens. Each had a use in nature, not only for beast and bird but for man. How many secrets they all held! Who knew to what new uses man would put them as his knowledge of all that the good Lord has provided increased from year to year! The boy Antoine, now: hardly a secret useful to the woodsman, in root, bark and twig, of all these trees that he did not know. Bob watched him curiously, while he helped his father at the culinary department. A product of the wilderness was Antoine, wise as a whole tree full of owls in the ways of life as it was lived here. And in this domain it was that knowledge that counted. A dollar was worth nothing here, unless it happened to be of silver

when it would make a poor but passable sinker! The locket of St. Dié swung and gleamed on Antoine's chest as he went noiselessly and efficiently about his work. Another useless bauble in this man's country! What was in it no man knew. Something of deviltry without a doubt, Bob guessed, for it came long ago from that bad old country of the Old World, where men had tamed and subdued Nature and in doing so had lost all that was most precious in their own souls. Bob was glad he was an American as he thought over that locket. We had the soul-healing wilderness with us yet, lots of it; and so long as it remained we would be the same idealistic nation, not quarrelsome, not burdened with the age-old wickedness that afflicted Europe and always would afflict it. It seemed to Bob that the root of Europe's trouble was overcrowding. There were forests there, but they were trained forests, like cornfields, with all the trees planted in rows. No birds were in them that could possibly be killed and eaten. No

fish in the brooks, not even minnows and frogs, for the last of them had been seined out and eaten by men in their fierce struggle to keep alive. Europe had lost the best of its soul in that struggle, Bob felt. This Nagushwa was an echo of that struggle, a diabolical contrivance of some Florentine jeweler's art, probably; something that the de' Medici might have had made for her. Inside it was an instrument of injustice, as Bob conceived it, something that long ago had wronged the Indians who inhabited this country. Their traditions were older than our written records. They knew what it contained and to this day were risking their lives to get what was in it. It seemed preposterous to Bob that that gold bauble had killed a man only last week, only two days ago, to be precise; yet it was so. Etienne had not dared leave his son in St. Prime because of it. There was the practical story of Nagushwa. To the simple *habitant* the only safe place for it was in the vaults of the church of St. Césare, where it had re-

mained for most of its history, as Etienne had told them.

Bob could not see why Etienne's sudden decision to take Antoine with him would help much. Word of their flight was sure to get back to the Indians by that subtle way news has of traveling through the forest. What was to prevent their being tracked and an attempt made to steal the locket while they were in camp? Why not this very night? They were not twenty-five miles from St. Prime, even back here in the heart of the wilderness.

These reflections were broken by the song and shout of Ajax and Diomed coming back to camp. Deep-chested and masculine, their voices rang in an exulting marching song. Out of a glade into the level shafts of the setting sun they marched, a long pole between them over shoulders and a deer hanging on it with his four feet tied together by a thong. John Charley followed, carrying the rifles. Etienne and Antoine dropped their work and

ran to look over the deer, bubbling French, all excited. It was fresh meat to them, and buckskin and deer sinew. They knew just what to do with every part of that deer. Bob helped put up a game pole and hang up their first meat. The two husks retired to their tent to talk it over, while Nishimi-wog started a roaring camp fire. Night fell, cold and sharp. Strings of trout joined the deer on the game pole as Ulysses and His Lordship returned, blessing the North and chanting volubly. A rousing feed; then every man to his tent, where in five minutes the rumbling snores of the dead-tired told of a good day's work well done.

All but Bob. The poet in him bade him sit out by the dying camp fire, watching the rosy fingers of the northern lights in the sky, the stars overhead, the moon coming up like a slow red fire in the east. A heavy sheepskin-lined canvas coat kept off the cold, so he could doze in comfort and smell the wood smoke from the fire. Slowly it burned down to dull red embers while silence brooded over all the

vast wilderness. This was the North, cold and cruel to those who did not know it, friendly and bounteous to its own children. To the southern boy, used to his vast cypress swamps, his great groves of long-leaf pine, his uplands caressed by the balmy softness of the southern air, it was all new and fascinating. The Voice of the North was ringing out and echoing up the lake in the silvery *Ha! Ha! Ha!* —*Ha! Ha! Ha!* of the loons disporting themselves in the moonlight. Bob lay awake, listening to their crazy laughter, trying to see one of the birds out in front of camp. Then a whitethroat woke up and sent his broken-hearted little refrain out into the night. Bob sat up, listening. Birds did not wake up unless disturbed by the pop of hemlock in the camp fire, and their fire was dead and dull. A call of a loon came from somewhere to his right, down the lake bank. It seemed muffled and not clear, not echoing, as it would if made out over water. A loon answered it; then another loon call sounded, muffled, to his left.

There was something human in that last call, something with not quite the wild tang of the real bird. Instantly Bob thought of Nagushwa and the Indians. Were they out in the forest right now and about to attempt some stealthy invasion of their camp in the hope of getting possession of the locket?

The loons out on the lake had ceased calling. That aroused the youth's suspicions more than anything else. He knew that nothing quieted a night bird so effectually as to attempt to imitate his call. Often he had done it himself, at home, with the great barred owl. No matter how perfectly he tried to make that hoot, the bird detected it instantly and stopped hooting himself.

Bob got up and went out silently into the forest. A lean-to tarp on the other side of the fire covered the browse bed where John Charley and Etienne and Antoine lay rolled in red Hudson Bay blankets. The lithe slender form on the side toward him must be the *habitant* boy, he decided.

Concealed under the dark foliage of a young spruce, Bob waited a long time, listening and watching. It had grown suddenly silent, for the loons had stopped calling altogether. There was no imagination about this, then! A twig snapped, off to his left in the woods, and Bob turned his head cautiously. But there was not a further sound, nor the least motion among the shadows.

Then—and even then he could hardly realize it—a silent figure stood beside the great pine tree trunk that rose back of the guides' lean-to. The ghostly flickers of the Borealis played on the figure, now faintly visible, now lost in the deep gloom.

Bob stood and watched, scarce breathing. The figure floated silently, step by step, out into the portage clearing, listening to the sounds of heavy breathing in the tents, searching with wary eyes the shadows under the lean-to. He was a young Indian buck, a village Indian, in a gray flannel shirt and dark homespun trousers, such as some *habitant*

might have worn, but the lank black hair that fell over his ears under his slouch hat betrayed him. He stooped noiselessly as Bob watched. Then his hand crept over Antoine's blanket and disappeared under a fold of it.

Bob leaped forward: "Here!" he called, sharply, and then sprang for the intruder. The buck leaped back, fending off Bob with his fist. The youth snatched for his wrists, an idea that the Indian might use his knife coming into his mind. But the young buck was far stronger than he was. With a quick twist he had broken Bob's hold and was gone like a shadow into the forest. Bob yelled and started in pursuit. He heard the camp—some of it—waking up behind him as he crashed into the underbrush. It was all a tangle of thick tree trunks with dead branches and twigs snapping and jabbing him in the face as he pushed through. The Indian had vanished. A fearful windfall of tree trunks in a hugh tangle of branches had swallowed him, like a squirrel darting into a brush pile.

Bob gave up the pursuit and returned to camp. He found Etienne turning out sleepily, yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"M'sieu Bob!—you awake!—Wat was be de matter, *hein?*" he asked, surprisedly.

"An Indian came into camp, Etienne—I think he was after Antoine's locket."

"*Sacré!*—Nagushwa!" growled Etienne, now wide awake. "Bah gosh, suh, I guess I was more better watch a leetle, me! You go to bed now, M'sieu."

Bob went back to his sleeping bag, mentally thanking the little whitethroat which had warned him. He was sleepy now. The night air and the vigil had been just what was needed to quiet his overtaxed body.

"Well, anyway, I saved that buck his life—if there is anything in this story of Nagushwa!" he muttered, as he adjusted the bag flaps over his shoulders. In a few minutes more he had let the whole affair rest on Etienne's shoulders and joined the snorers in the forester tent house.

CHAPTER III

OLD PLOW-HANDLES

THE canoes were all out on the lake when Bob turned out of his sleeping bag next morning. It was broad daylight and the sun was rising over the hills to the east. Antoine was alone in camp, puttering around a log range made of the ruins of last night's back-log fire. Appetizing odors of coffee and bacon came from his direction.

"Ah—Monsieur Bob!—Thanks!—Thanks!" he cried out on catching sight of him. He rushed toward Bob his eyes sparkling with delight and gratitude. "My fader, heem tol' me all about it—*Mon Dieu*—dat Nagushwa!" he sighed, shaking his head.

Bob slapped young Antoine's shoulder heartily. "It was lucky that I just happened to be too tired to sleep! It shows, though,

Antoine, that we'll have to keep a guard around camp all the time. Does Lord Jim know?"

"Oh, la la!" laughed Antoine. "*Does* he! 'My word! Rippin'—simply rippin',' " he mimicked the genial peer. "He was all for us starting on their trail *tout de suite,* but Nishimi-wog said, 'Trout!—Lak dat,' holding hees hand about three feet apart, and that turned him off. M'sieu Bob will have his breakfast?" he broke off to inquire.

"Sure! You'll teach me how to fly cast, Antoine?" asked Bob, "I'd like to know the rudiments before I go near a real trout."

"Glad to, M'sieu Bob!" said the boy brightly. He brought him coffee and bacon and a huge platter of flapjacks. Bob downed them and went for his rod case. Jointing up the long slender bamboo, he put on the reel and threaded its tapered line through the guides. Antoine showed him how to attach the leader and fly and then went out on the gaunt, bare bones of a huge balsam trunk that

was being used for a canoe landing, carrying the rod with him.

"One first strip out line for de length of de rod, M'sieu Bob—so!" he explained. "And then casts, little mo' each time—so! Now see, it get longer—twenty—thirty—forty feet—so! Now I pull up de rod and hold my wrist up straight—so; wait for de back cast to straighten out behind; den snap forward—so! *Voilà, la bas!*"

He had driven the line forward and it snapped out like a whiplash. Before the fly dropped he released a yard of line held out by his left hand and it shot through the guides, adding to the cast. The leader tumbled out straight ahead of the end of the line and the flies cascaded over it and floated on the still waters. Bob watched critically. Antoine was about to repeat the lesson, when the trout of Loon Lake decided to continue it for Bob's benefit, for suddenly there was a dark swirl, a flash of a yellow belly and a pink mouth, and the fly disappeared in a smash of foam.

Antoine struck with a sharp twitch of his wrist: "Get you' landing net, M'sieu!" he called, as the line went taut and began to gyrate in wide circles, ripping through the water in a small spout of white. Bob dashed to the tent for his net. While he was unfolding it and opening out its loop the savage little trout leaped clear—three or four leaps in a row—dove again and darted for the protection of the tree branches below. Antoine ran out on a branch and held the rod in a doubled arc that snubbed out against his rush. Bob yelled encouragement and made his way out on the trunk. The trout veered off in an incredibly swift rush and broke water twenty feet away. Then line was stripped in under Antoine's forefinger as the trout was drawn, struggling viciously, toward them just under the surface. Bob made a scoop with the net, but the trout avoided it by leaping out of the water, splashing flying drops all over them. Again he circled, and again the swaying and dipping rod brought him in.

"Now, M'sieu!" gritted Antoine.

Bob scooped again. He did not grasp just how he had managed it, but the net came up with a gorgeous green and yellow and red-spotted little demon squirming in it. He grabbed the fish among the meshes and bore him quickly to land.

"So!" laughed Antoine, happily. "We'll have him for more breakfast, M'sieu Bob."

Bob took the rod from him and started in himself on this new game. The trick was easy to learn, but the trout that rose to his Montreal and Brown Hackle were quick and wily. He finally landed a double, however, and came into camp rejoicing.

"Spoils of war!" he grinned. "Fast and furious!—they're right good little fighters, and smart as lightning, I'll say!"

"Dey eat good, too—you like our Canada trout, eh?" queried Antoine, offering him the first victim, browned.

"Pie!" declared Bob after one mouthful.

"Pie? Wat was dat?" Antoine shrugged

his shoulders gayly; then he jumped up and clapped his hands boyishly. Etienne's long birchbark was coming around the nearest point. His Lordship was holding up a trout a yard long and waving his hat like a maniac.

"I say, Bob—topping!—what!" he called. "And we saw a moose! Rather! The blighter was bigger'n an elephant!" He bubbled French and English in alternate streaks as Etienne swept the canoe ashore. His Lordship sizzled with enthusiasm; the trout were "rippin," the scenery was "no end wonderful," and—that moose! Words failed Lord Jim entirely!

"Heem was be Ole Plow-Handles, I t'ink, yes, sure, mebbe!" grinned Etienne. "I mak de birchbark horn an' we was call heem this evening."

"My dear old chap, take this Montreal and this Silver Doctor and go catch one of these gorgeous little demons—you really must!" urged His Lordship, pressing his own rod into Bob's hands.

The boy pointed to his "double," the trout lying side by side on a mossy bank, and then to his own rod, jointed up and lying against the tent.

"Been taking lessons already," he smiled. "How's that for a beginner, eh?"

"Jolly good!" barked His Lordship. "I've dreamed, Bob old thing, *dreamed* of such fishing as this! My word! We'll have all we want of it!"

Another canoe came grating in on the beach. Ajax and Diomed looked mysterious. They straggled up the beach carrying nonchalantly a string of two-pound trout, and the first of the Trojans they asked for was Ulysses. The husks would rather horse old Brains, as they called Ulysses, than eat. Bob knew of their little failing, and he winked at the others to keep quiet and let them work their works. Presently Ulysses swept in, driven by John Charley's silent paddle.

"Rotten fishing," he remarked casually, dropping his creel on the beach. It looked

suspiciously bulgy as to its cover. He opened it and began casting out trout after trout. Then he snapped the cover shut. "How did you fellows make out?" he asked his ancient rivals, these sons of Anak—Ajax and Diomed.

"Tol'ble, son, tol'ble!" chirped Ajax displaying their catch.

"Match you for high rod!" challenged Ulysses.

"A stake! A stake, y' know!" put in His Lordship, grinning gleefully.

"High Rod goes with Lord Jim for the moose this evening," suggested Bob.

"All right," agreed Ulysses and they measured the largest of their respective catches.

"We win, Di!" roared Ajax. "Judgment, Lord Jim!"

"Hold on—I forgot one!" said Ulysses craftily, opening his creel. Out of it he drew a long fellow, a beauty, all of four pounds. "He was in the net and out of the net until I thought I'd never land him!" declared Ulysses,

happily, holding him up for them all to admire. "Do I win?"

"Yes, you *don't!*" yelled Ajax and Diomed, "we forgot one, too!" The pair of them spurted up sand as they stamped for their canoe where, chortling with glee, they began cutting something loose from the bottom grating of their canoe. Then they hauled him over the gunwale. Ulysses' eyes popped and His Lordship howled excited English ululations as that fish slipped over—more and more of him—and fell on the sand, yards of him, long as an oar, with a tail as wide as your hand! Green and gold and red, he was a prince, a five-pounder!

The husks started for Ulysses' shirt tail to cut it off with a camp knife according to their ancient custom—but he beat them to the bush.

"My word—where did you boys ever learn trout fishing?" barked His Lordship as he looked the High Rod fish over.

"Didn't," said Diomed, succinctly. "We're used to bass and pike. Ajax was trying to get

his fly out of my ear, when I looked around and saw that my line had disappeared entirely. Ajax had a theory that we ought to let him swallow it clear down to his tail and then deftly pull him inside out—so we did that little thing."

They loafed around camp and discussed trout and that attempted theft of Nagushwa, for there was a lazy reaction from the fatigues of the Big Portage and no one felt energetic. Ajax skinned out his deer and bagged the meat in cheesecloth to keep out blow flies. Late in the afternoon His Lordship and Diomed made ready the birch canoe to go with Etienne to the lily-pad cove where Old Plow-Handles had been seen. While they were gone, Bob, Ulysses and Patroclus were to be left at grouse shooting around camp, so as to be near Antoine in case the Montaignais should make another attempt to steal Nagushwa.

The grouse safari started in while they were still at the evening meal. John Charley grunted suddenly and made the Indian bird

sign with flapping hands, pointing into the forest and glancing significantly at Patroclus, evidently considering him the weakest and therefore most effeminate of the party—the bird shooter. He did not know Pat!

Patroclus left the table to pick up his .30 Army and slip in a clip of armory shells.

"Gee, fellows, there are two of them in that spruce! Sharpen up the camp ax and get the mulligan pot raidy!" he joked, treading gingerly off into the bush.

The two grouse sat in the spruce craning their necks stupidly and calling *Peent! Peent! Peent!* with the inane tameness of barnyard fowl. Presently Pat stopped and raised his rifle. *Whang!—Whang!* went the short barks of his armory cartridges, with just a second in between to reload. A fluttering and drumming on the needles under the spruce told where they had dropped as he pushed forward to retrieve his game. At sight of that Ulysses and Bob searched hurriedly for their rifles and ammunition and melted into the for-

est, for it would take six more grouse like those to make a proper mulligan.

Then Etienne's canoe set forth, gliding silently along the lake shore toward the cove at its upper end. Diomed paddled at bow, with his rifle handy, sticking up beside his knee. His Lordship squatted amidships, scanning the lake shore ahead eagerly.

"No weegly 'bout!—No make leetly nowse!" whispered Etienne warningly. "Ah'll 'fraid all tam every minute you was speel all of it. Dis can-noe steady hol' boats if you'll don't jump an' weegly all tam."

Diomed and His Lordship turned themselves to observant statues at that whispered caution of Etienne's. The shores floated silently by, dented and fringed with bushy evergreens, marked all around the lake by a brown belt that represented the level of the winter snows. Once His Lordship turned with a low "I say!" as they passed a cove with a deep backwater bog where two huge shaggy brown animals were feeding.

Etienne grinned reassuringly: "Dem was be cows," he told the excited Englishman. "Bull moose, heem back in de hwoods. You was see ol' Plow-Handles to-night, sure mebbe."

The sun was setting when the canoe finally beached on a small point which commanded two coves whose backwater bogs were set in the low green amphitheater of the Laurentian hills. Gaunt dead trees and an occasional bushy white spruce dotted the green floor of the bog. It was down through here that Old Plow-Handles would come. Diomed and His Lordship climbed up trees where they could watch each bog. Just as the sun had disappeared over the rim of the western ridges Etienne raised his birchbark horn to his lips.

A long, wavering, and querulous call rang out. Indescribably wild, it was a sound that no other creature in the world but a cow moose could make. It ended in a jerky, impatient grunt. The echoes of it rang and floated

through the hills until lost in the far distances.

Silence; while Diomed and His Lordship listened, scarce daring to breathe. Not a sound came in answer. The wee, piping call of a disconsolate Canada whitethroat rose from a bush down the shore. All the northland brooded in inscrutable mystery. Minutes passed on into the infinity of northern time. A quarter of an hour later Etienne raised his horn and again sent out the lonesome call of the cow.

This time a faint reply came—but from far up in the hills on Diomed's side. It might have been the bark of a dog. After a period of excited waiting, from a near-by ridge came the challenging, *"Ou-ach!"* of a bull moose—thrills shivered through the listening Diomed as he thumbed his rifle hammer and cautiously threw down the magazine lever to make sure that a bright, brass cartridge was in the chamber. Presently a hollow rattle on dry wood and an eager grunt came from much nearer up the bog. Rattling his antlers against the trees,

grunting as he came, the Lord of the North was hurrying to the tryst!

Then there was a disconcerting silence. He was evidently stopping to investigate before coming nearer. Diomed tested the wind anxiously with wetted forefinger. No; he could not get their scent, for it blew, what little there was, out toward the lake.

Etienne put his horn close to the ground and gave out an enticing whine. Another grunt came, immediately, and then out through a thicket of spruce jutted cautiously an enormous, ungainly head, surmounted with great yellow antlers just recently out of the velvet. He was still at least three hundred yards off, Diomed judged. The bull shook his antlers and the long black bell under his shaggy neck wiggled. Cautiously, so as hardly to make a perceptible motion, Diomed let himself down out of his tree, grabbed up his rifle, and humped for the cover of a small bushy cedar where he could stand up and shoot.

Etienne filled the horn with water and let it

dribble into the lake. The bull grunted again. Scarcely had he done so when from the bog on His Lordship's side there came a loud *"Ouach! Ouach!"* stern, challenging, menacing. It said, "Did any one here say F-I-G-H-T! Well, here I *am!"*

"My word—Old Plow-Handles himself!" called out His Lordship in a low voice, and cautiously slipping down out of his tree, Diomed looked to him for a signal when to shoot, for there were two moose now and both he and Lord Jim would have to fire together.

Etienne's wild black eyes gleamed. "Ah'll show you some beeg moose fight, pooty soon, me!" he whispered hoarsely. "Wait!"

Old Plow-Handles had evidently been taking the approach of the other bull and had been coming himself, noiselessly determined to see about this!

To tease him Etienne rattled his horn belligerently against a log and then raised it to his lips and barked out a defiant *"Ouach!—Ouach!"* derisive, insulting, arrogant, insolent.

Old Plow-Handles let out a squealing trumpet of rage and burst from cover—to charge, head down, straight for them!

"Shoot, everybody!—Shoot——!" squalled Etienne. Diomed braced himself, his rifle at shoulder. His own moose had come out again, perhaps a hundred yards nearer, and stood looking toward him, undecided whether to face Old Plow-Handles in a single combat or not. Diomed held the silver bead steady behind the shoulder and pulled trigger. His moose flinched, grunting fiercely. Then a scared yell from Etienne spun him around. Old Plow-Handles was now thundering down upon them, not seventy yards off. His Lordship stood out like a rock, holding his English express rifle steady on him. They saw an immense spread of massive pointed palms that protected the bull's shoulders; a bony head with crinkled nose, split by red snarling lips over savage teeth that yearned for their lives as the great bull came on like a ton of incarnate hate and rage.

Would His Lordship *never* fire! Sixty, fifty, forty yards the distance lessened. The young Englishman was used to standing his ground before tiger, lion and elephant, no doubt, but Diomed felt like swarming up the nearest tree and Etienne was already leaping for cover. Di raised his rifle and covered the charging moose, ashamed not to stand and back His Lordship. Then the express rifle bellowed. Diomed saw Lord Jim's shoulder kick back a foot under the recoil, as a cloud of smoke obliterated Plow-Handles in a white mist. *Bang!* went the rifle a second time, and Old Plow-Handles went down on his nose, his long legs doubled under him.

"Scuppered him, my word! Rather!" ejaculated His Lordship, coolly.

He slipped in two fresh shells and they all went forward. After walking completely around the noble prize, they had all stopped in front of him and were admiring the spread of his massive antlers when suddenly Old Plow-Handles raised his head and looked at

them. Diomed had often seen deer do this, in their last struggles, and thought that it was a final effort.

"Peeg! Chicken!—Ol' dev!" taunted Etienne. "You was feel pooty seek, *hein?*"

It was like touching off a bomb! The great moose leaped to his feet and in that leap he had come directly in front of them, not three feet away. His antlers were lowered at His Lordship and on the instant he charged. There was no time to so much as cock the rifle. Lord Jim prodded the brute in the nose with the rifle muzzle, but the impact of it knocked the weapon out of his hands. Undaunted, he grabbed for the long tines lowered at him and hung on. Plow-Handles tossed his head and the man rose, floundered a frantic instant in the huge pans, and was pitched headlong, the sharp tines ripping His Lordship's riding breeches from knee to thigh. He landed head and shoulders in the bog and Plow-Handles made after him with a trumpet of rage. Then Diomed came to life and fired into his

shoulder as he passed a few feet away. That changed his mind, right off! Plow-Handles swung around facing Di, his head swaying from side to side, his left foreleg useless and tottering under him. His eyes spoke murder, but before he had time to move Di shot him again, full in the chest. He tottered, his forelegs gave way beneath him and the vast weight of him crashed to earth—to stay.

Diomed looked around with an exultant whoop, throwing back his head in a laugh that cracked the skies. Just what the reaction is that makes the human animal do that in his moment of triumph no one has yet fathomed. We see it in savages; doubtless our own cavemen ancestors did it when victorious over cave bear and lion.

"All over—come out, men!" yelled Di, finally finding his voice. No one answered him. Etienne had grabbed up His Lordship and dragged him to comparative safety under the branches of a down tree. Then his head popped up over the trunk.

"Lord Jeem, he was come dead, I dunno," he said as Di ran over anxiously; "Good boy, M'sieu Di! Me, I was grab hees gun; den Ah'll drap eet an' yoomp for *heem*. *Diable!* One poke from dat moose, hees hoofs of it, an' Lord Jeem was be keel entirely!"

Lord Jim's eyes opened at that moment: " 'Pon my word, ye know!" he muttered feebly, "Poisonous swine, that moose—rather!"

They helped him to his feet. At once he staggered over to examine the foe, and presently it was all explained. His bullet, fired when Old Plow-Handles was charging, had crashed through one of the immense ridge vertebræ of his neck and had temporarily stunned the great spinal nerve. Otherwise he was practically unharmed and could have done a vast amount of execution and gone away unhurt.

"My word, young Galt, but I owe you something for that bit—what!" smiled Lord Jim, gripping Diomed's hand strongly. "And really I'd like to meet the rotter who said

there is no dangerous big game in America—ra–*ther!*"

"Seems like I lost a moose, too, hyarabouts," exclaimed Diomed happily. "Let's go look for him!"

They went over to find Diomed's moose. He was stone dead in his tracks. The powerful .35 had struck back of his shoulder and stopped within him. He must have stood stock-still and fallen slowly over when Di had turned away at Etienne's yell.

"Dat settle eet; two moose, de meat, de hides, de horns of it—we was move de camp over here," declared Etienne, as Di and His Lordship were examining Diomed's antlers. It was a smaller head than Old Plow-Handles, but the pans were wide, with a spread of about forty-seven inches, and the tines were long. Altogether a massive and impressive trophy for the Galt Plantation manor hall down South, thought Diomed, as he gloated over his prize proudly. As to Old Plow-Handles, His Lordship had measured him already—a trifle

under sixty inches spread and the tines so long and thick that they had given him his name "Plow-Handles." Sportsmen for years had tried to call him, or even to get a sight of him without success, Etienne told them.

"Dat odder bull, heem was be it dat bring out dis ol' dev," he declared. "Me call heem, wan, two, t'ree years—but no can do. Heem was wise guy, de sports say."

"Fawncy!" ejaculated His Lordship. "No end of a swine—what! But I'm rawther a lucky devil, ye know. Got Mrs. Four-Claws, a Bengal tiger that our mess up in Nepal had given up as hopeless. I hadn't any young chap to stand by with an extra barrel, though!" he exclaimed, looking appreciatively at Diomed. "She'd killed my only gun-bearer, ye know."

Diomed grinned. The praise of one brave man for another felt good, but he had no words for reply.

Etienne fixed up both trophies for the night by tying bandannas to the antlers. Flapping about in the night breeze, they would serve to

keep away small prowlers. The party was heading toward the canoe when the guide suddenly stopped on the shore and looked out over the dim bosom of the lake, peering intently.

"*Hein?*—Canoe was come!" he announced in low tones.

Whoever was in it was in a direful hurry, for they could hear the rapid stroke of paddles long before the canoe itself was visible to any eyes but Etienne's. It turned out to be Bob and Patroclus and Nishimi-wog, in the eighteen-foot guide's model. They ran her ashore, full tilt, a short distance away, and Bob beckoned to His Lordship to come over, his meaningful glances urging haste.

"Lord Jim—the boy Antoine's been kidnaped—kidnaped by the Montaignais, we think!" he announced in low tones. "We're starting two parties after them right off—who's going to break the news to Etienne?" he asked, in almost a whisper, glancing over at the unconscious guide with the deepest sympathy in his eyes.

CHAPTER IV

LA RIVIÈRE DU NORD

"ANTOINE kidnaped! By the Montaignais! Fawncy!"

His Lordship gave a low whistle of surprise. Then his face grew stern. It seemed, as Bob watched, that he could almost see His Lordship turn at the news from the light-hearted, careless sportsman to the stern, just, law-enforcing young English ruler.

"The infernal cheek of these Indians, though!" exploded Lord Jim. "They'll soon find that they cannot pull our leg like that anywhere in His Majesty's dominions!" Once again he had become the British civil administrator in a land of savages. Kipling had made Bob well acquainted with the breed; the lone and usually youthful Englishman, capable, fearless, just; daring to go alone into a strong-

hold of Malay tribesmen or into a camp of fanatical red men with equal indifference, and to compel obedience by the sheer might of the Empire behind him and the justice of his words.

He stalked over to where Etienne still waited, fussing incuriously with the canoe. Before he had got three words out, the French-Canadian was in transports of emotion.

"Antoine tooken!—*Oh—sacré tonnerre! Oh, mon pauvre petit garçon!*" he howled. "Curse dat Nagushwa! I keel! I keel! Wat we do?—Wat we do, M'sieus?" he shrieked.

Terror, rage, utter incapacity to think or plan possessed the emotional *habitant*. He looked to his white men for relief and guidance as would a wounded dog.

"Steady, now, Etienne—it's all right!" put in Bob. "Here's what we do—it's all planned, and they are not an hour ahead of us—you and Di are to go right over in the birchbark and follow on their direct trail. Lord Jim, Pat and I and Nishimi-wog are to try to head them

off with the guide's model by going down a river called La Rivière du Nord. Nishimi-wog thinks that they have taken Antoine to a village of the Naskapi forty miles north. He followed them along the moose trail around the lake until it came out on the old Naskapi Fur Trail. There he found a white feather, dropped from Antoine's hat, and his boot-prints were pointing north. The moccasins, too, are Naskapi, Nishimi-wog says. He's going with us, as he speaks their dialect——"

Etienne did not wait further than to learn the main outlines—who was to go and where. He rushed for his canoe, breathing hoarsely.

"Coom, M'sieu Di!" he begged, holding the gunwale, mad to be off. Diomed leaped in, and at once the birchbark shot out, while the rapid sculling of Etienne's paddle at stern kept even the rugged Diomed paddling hard to keep her bow on course.

"Poor devil!" murmured His Lordship, as their canoe swept out into the gloom. "Father and son! Think of his feelings as a parent,

boys! None of us feel that, or can half appreciate it. And now, Bob, just how did you manage to let them kidnap the boy, with you all in camp?" he asked, sardonically.

"We weren't," protested Bob, earnestly. "Pat and I and Nishimi-wog were out fishing, and Ulysses and Ajax were in camp, or near it, grouse shooting. They weren't a bit far off, for they heard a single shriek from the boy, but that was all. They both rushed back to camp to find him gone. None of us dreamed, you know, that they'd take *him*—it was this Nagushwa that they were after, we all thought."

"The blighters!" ejaculated His Lordship. "Now, why did they *not* take the locket? That would be only a theft, but kidnaping's a crime, in these Dominions."

"Ulysses has an idea that they were afraid to open it themselves, so they are going to take him somewhere and force *him* to open it—the poor kid!" said Patroclus, his voice quivering with the intense sympathy of his nature.

"Why, it will kill him, too, if the inscription on the cover means anything, you see."

Lord Jim whistled. "That's so—by Jove! The blighters! But we'll have a word to say about that, I fawncy! What else, Bob?"

"We came paddling in at the call, and John Charley, here, at once began tracking them. There is quite a party; Naskapi, the kinsman of the Montaignais, and a few of the latter. They went north along the Naskapi Fur Trail, he found out. He told me about this Rivière du Nord—it flows into the Chamouchouan. We can beat them to the Naskapi village by running it. So I organized both parties, with Di to lead one of them, and you the other, sir. We ought to start right away. Good thing there is a moon. We can make the carry by moonlight and push on down the river early to-morrow."

"Good! I say, have you provisions and blankets, y' know?"

"Yes, sir, they are in the guide's model. I brought it because it is the lightest and larg-

est, except Etienne's birchbark, which is too heavy. With each man wearing his rucksack, we can swing the canoe over all our heads and make as fast time as walking, over the portages."

"Good head, Bob!" smiled Lord Jim. "Well, let's get on with it!"

They piled in and Nishimi-wog shoved off from the point. The canoe carried their party of four—the three lightest and Nishimi-wog —with just freeboard enough for a few days' rations and their blankets and rifles.

"I say, Nishimi-wog, have you ever run this Rivière du Nord?" asked Lord Jim, as the canoe started across the cove headed for the northwestern corner of the lake.

"No, M'sieu," grunted John Charley, stolidly. "Mooch bad watair, me know; plenty portage. Me find um," he added confidently.

None of the rest of the party realized the importance of finding those portage trails on an unknown river. A blaze on a tree, a shelving rock, a mere dirt crevice between two huge

pines might be all that marked them. Passing one inadvertently meant, perhaps, getting into deadly rapids. But as they were all tenderfeet in sporty waters, none of them attached much importance to the river ahead of them. Like all rivers, it could be and had been run, no doubt, so they scarce gave it a thought.

"Who are these Naskapi, John?" asked Bob, as the canoe swept silently on through the gloom.

"*Shhh!* No talk loud! Injun got big ear!" cautioned Nishimi-wog in low tones. "Naskapi de Nenenot, dey call demselves, dey was cousins of us Montaignais. Mooch wild; *sauvage*. Me no see um, till come winter, when dey bring furs. Dey come down de fur trail to de Chamouchouan. Long toboggan. Dog team—lak Eskimo. Snowshoe. We was go to dat co'ntree now."

They paddled on in utter silence, now, for a faint black line ahead told them that they were nearing the north cove. Then, through the gloom, the opposite hills loomed up and

the black shadow of a wall of trees reached out over the still water. Two tall gaunt dead pines appeared at the head of the little bay at the northern end of the lake and here would begin the portage over the La Rivière du Nord.

"*Hst!* No make leetly nowse!—Leesten!" whispered Nishimi-wog as the paddles fell silent and the canoe floated like a ghost on the black surface of the little bay. Only the Indian's paddle moved, soundlessly, without once leaving the water. They could hear the slight gurgle of waters around its blade and see stumps and down trees floating slowly past. Everybody was listening and watching the forest, hardly daring to breathe, for it was quite likely that the portage was watched.

John Charley grunted softly and stepped out on a down tree, motioning Bob to hold the canoe fast. Noiselessly he vanished across the fallen timber of the backwater. For a long time there was not a sound. Then a few whitethroats woke up and started their wee song, but not a swish of a branch nor a crack

of a twig broke the stillness. A sudden thwack of a beaver's tail and the splash of some muskrat diving were the only sounds that told them the Indian was moving, scouting through the timber along shore.

Then came a low whistle from the depths of the forest gloom ahead. The canoe glided onward and presently ran into a narrow stumpy channel.

"Awright! Coom. Dere was nobody here —sure 'bout dat!" came Nishimi-wog's hoarse whisper.

A muddy trail scour greeted them as the canoe ran ashore. It was a trail seldom used, except in the fur season, but it was well enough cleared to start along without waiting for the moon. Each man strapped his pack on his shoulders and the canoe was swung up over the heads of all four of them. Stepping together, they felt their way up through the silent woods, the branches of hemlock and birch swishing along the upturned bottom of the canoe.

They were in the barren ground highlands when the moon came up, red and enormous, over the black points of spruce spires to the east. The trail wound over and through the low hills, great bowlders all about, shining white in the silvery moonlight. Splashing through bogs, scrambling up rocky declivities, it led them, mile after mile. The canoe sat light on four shoulders; the five miles of the trail went by as fast as one could walk. But, as might be expected, they were totally unprepared for what is really meant by the voyageur's term, "sporty water."

A dull boom and roar sounded ahead as the trail once more plunged into dense forest. It became louder and more menacing with every step forward. The trail dipped down. Densely wooded hills rose up opposite, and in the bottom of that ravine was this unseeing Thing, hungry and growling, its voice muttering thunder.

Then they suddenly came out on the banks of La Rivière du Nord, tossing the canoe

aside, shouting at each other and pointing, shaking their heads and talking—but no one could hear what was said in the presence of that mighty uproar. White and black in the moonlight, the tempestuous river thundered past, its tossing mane foaming, hoods of its spray spouting up over sinister black rocks. It was a fearful and wonderful thing to look at! One huge wave, like a foam-crested surf billow thrown lengthwise of the river, fascinated them with its unchanging power and ferocity. Forever holding its place, it leaped and foamed in one continuous roar of untrammeled freedom. Behind it a boiling rabble of waters lashed and eddied through a comb of granite teeth. Back of that was the opposite bank, sheer walls of scoured granite that rose up from white and troubled depths.

Bob felt that never before had he realized the insolent freedom, the vigor, the complete unrestrained savagery of Nature as now. Here was one of her very own rivers, old as Nature herself, older than record, older than

all the races of man, which for countless ages had leaped and thundered down this granite-bound cleft, had slain innumerable living things in its day with the callous cruelty of the mighty, and had never known an instant's restraint, a moment's check, or a second's curbing.

Sporty water, indeed! How much would all their lives be worth in ten seconds' grip of this rushing monster tossing its white mane restlessly to and fro! Bob leaned over and shouted in Nishimi-wog's ear: "Don't you know *anything* about this river, John?" he screeched.

The Indian shook his head and pointed silently to the beginnings of a trail down the river bank. Others had used it, and the portages around the rapids would be easy to find, he seemed to mean.

Bob thought that it would be all right—*if* they didn't inadvertently pass any portage landings!

At a sign from His Lordship they all picked

up the canoe again and started on. The trail wound along close to the rapids at first, then ascended a hill and skirted along through the timber for some time, while the mutter of troubled waters came ceaselessly up from the ravine. Then it pitched down abruptly, to come out on a high bluff, with still and silent pools below them.

"Simply toppin', this—what!" grinned His Lordship as they sat down and looked the place over as a spot in which to stop and get in some sleep.

"I'll say so, sir! It's going to be *some* trip!" came back Bob.

He and Nishimi-wog set to work lashing the canoe on its side to two tree trunks and then spread a light tarp up from its upper gunwale to two poles which Patroclus had cut. Guying these out, they had a shelter that would sleep the four in a row. The packs were stowed along the lower side of the canoe and the blankets and sleeping bags rolled out. In five minutes the whole party was dead

asleep, with the dog-tiredness of the utterly weary.

Early next morning a hurried breakfast was urged along and the party reëmbarked. For several miles the river was a still backwater, with dense spires of black spruce and naked dead trees crowding down into the stream on both banks. The hills were invisible behind the dark green barrier. A bull moose stepped hastily and silently ashore at the head of a reach. Then came a bend and the waters began to move more swiftly. There was current again; birch and hemlock clasping friendly hands overhead, great brown bowlders swimming like giant turtles under the keel, the occasional *V* of a snag jutting up in the placid current. Bob kept watching the banks, looking for the blaze of a portage landing, for there was a chattering of waters on ahead and a white mist rose through the trees.

Nishimi-wog cocked his head and listened. Then his face turned back to them, his eyes smoldering like a leopard's.

"Leetly rapeed—we was roon heem sure!" he grinned, as the water quickened beneath their keel. Almost immediately the stream narrowed and white water began to show, eddies and wavelets made by the increasing current. A gap in the spruces opened up, and then, with a sudden giddy plunge down a swift and deep chute, they were in the rapids. The roar burst on them like whisking aside a curtain. Great shaggy bowlders, spruce-clad and moss-grown, jutted out into the stream, and in between them the river flung its whole force like a lunging snake. The canoe swung wildly broadside to; John Charley, paddling like a demon, spurned her from the teeth of a rock and Bob felt his paddle spring as his arms bent it doggedly and forced the stern out. They shot at once into a white rabble of foaming waters. To Bob the canoe seemed hardly moving at all; it was only when he glanced at the shores rushing backward that he grasped their terrific speed. His Lordship was yelling like a Comanche, paddling furiously.

Bob wanted to get up and yell, too, at the top of his lungs, but John Charley's arms reaching far out and grabbing enormous paddlefuls of water kept him equally busy swinging the stern clear as rock after rock swept by.

Then they shouted in unison, for a huge down tree came to view directly across their path. There was no stopping the canoe, no avoiding it! Its under side seemed hardly to clear the water. There was a foot, maybe two feet, under it, but every one fell flat back as for a breathless instant she jammed her bows under it, hung a second and then scraped through while the waters backed up astern came boiling over the gunwale.

"Oop! Paddle queek!" screamed Nishimiwog, rising, to paw frantically at the mad waters. Bob leaped to his seat and drove in his paddle to the breaking point. The canoe was swinging broadside to the current and a big gnashing rock that cleft the current in twain seemed rushing upstream to meet them. By a hair she was straightened in time, graz-

ing the rock with a jar that set every one's teeth on edge.

John Charley now began to develop symptoms of extreme perturbation. He clawed on all sides of the canoe and shouted back something over his shoulder that no one could hear. Bob thought he wanted to cross the rapids to the other side, but his utmost efforts did not seem to move the canoe an inch that way. Then John Charley could stand it not a second longer: "Paddle, left side—paddle!" he screeched. Bob shifted and the canoe shot over. Once in the maw of the current on that side it swept downstream like a swallow, hurdled a sunken log like dipping over the surf—and darted for the brink of a waterfall ahead!

A simultaneous yell burst from His Lordship and Patroclus. You could have knocked their eyes nicely off their cheeks with a stick. A neat and irrevocable plunge and a sousing that would be cold and wet seemed imminent. But, just as the bow of the canoe jutted out

into space, John Charley gave its bow a mighty flip off to the left and the canoe whirled, and, instead of diving, smacked the water below with an even keel and slid and raced off into a still backwater again.

"My word! Glorious! Simply topping!" gurgled His Lordship ecstatically. "I move we shoot *all* of them hereafter—shawn't we?"

Nishimi-wog's eyes beamed like a child's, for the white man's praise felt good. Only Bob's hard and drawn face said "No!" The rest were ready to shoot all rapids—*any* rapids —any time, now!

"Great sport, sir—if we only knew something about what we were getting into beforehand," he demurred. "Certainly is fun, though."

"De portage was all be mark," said John Charley, confidently. "If no blaze—can shoot um."

The canoe floated on for several miles placidly down the backwater. It seemed too good to last, and they caught themselves won-

dering what new prank this unknown river was going to play on them next.

But it meandered on and on through a fairy-land, the sun, now high up in the heavens, making wavering blotches of bright reflections on the silent green waters. The dip, flip, of the paddles kept up, with only the occasional grunt of John Charley Nishimi-wog at bow warning of some jutting rock or sunken tree. Then imperceptibly the river quickened its pace again. It now purred merrily, and they all watched the shores anxiously for signs of the next portage. A low whisper was stealing back to them from the walls of a high-walled ravine ahead, and a deep sound, seemingly coming up through the earth all around, smote their ears. John Charley listened, his face tense and hard as he dipped his paddle cautiously, but no portage blaze came in sight.

But it was rank treachery, that whisper! For suddenly the river whisked them around a bend and shot them into a rocky gorge with a long reach of angry water ahead. Before their

questioning eyes, a host of granite blocks, showered with spray, poked their sharp noses out of the river which boiled and leaped around them.

"Great! Sporty water!" whooped His Lordship. "Let's run them, John!"

"I guess, mebbe so—sure 'bout dat!" said the Indian, reluctantly, for that deep undertone was still in his ears. "I was see no portage landing. All right—moos be!"

Right or wrong, the river was giving them little choice now! They became aware of an instant acceleration of pace as it gripped the canoe. John Charley stabbed at rocks in their path and Bob swung the stern to right and left as big and little bowlders whirled by. They were traveling at a headlong pace, now, and the canoe reeled and wallowed up to her gunwales in foam. Bob felt that they had gotten into something the length and extent and difficulties of which they knew nothing, but there was no leisure to think of that. He was wholly occupied in keeping steerage way on the canoe. His Lordship plied his

own paddle and was aiding their headlong flight, now driving it in on this side, now on the other. Huge gnashing black rocks, sudden and giddy chutes, bowlders ahead which cleft the navigable water in two equally impossible halves had to be met and dealt with all in a breath. John Charley's paddle flew at bow. His shoulders worked with demoniacal fury as he dragged the canoe bodily over to clean water or shoved off a threatening rock edge. Bob used his utmost strength to swing the stern clear. The battling waters broke over the bows, the uproar of the rapids drowned every other sound, and steadily the walls of the gorge closed in on them. There was no escape now!

"Shoot her or bust!" whooped His Lordship, in most un-English slang. The furious pace was setting every one's nerves tingling with excitement; each new danger averted or overcome filled them with an intoxication of delight, but their yells could not be heard above the turmoil of the shouting river.

And then the end came—came with the jarring crash of the canoe upon a huge shelving granite ledge that nearly crossed the roaring stream! There was a terrific cauldron of waters boiling around the left end, but John Charley, with a sudden glance ahead, a sudden flip of his paddle, had deliberately wrecked them on that fearful thing!

Three yells of protest went up, to be instantly stifled as His Lordship, Bob and Patroclus were thrown headlong out of the canoe and leaped up to help the Indian drag her out of the grip of the gnashing torrent. For explanation John Charley was pointing downstream over the top of the ledge, and gibbering strange Montaignais oaths.

Bob scrambled up and looked over—and his heart stood still in his body. For below was revealed the appalling fate which had awaited them all! Beyond the rock a sharp line of white foam stretched, and beyond that —nothing! Nothing but the blue distances of a lower gorge. The whole river was tumbling

down in a shaggy white cascade forty feet high, to split in misty boiling clouds of vapor on jagged rock pinnacles that formed here a wide ledge. Up from it rose clouds of mist, and below that they could hear the thunder of the lower falls; while far down was the black lower pool, streaked with white foam, sullen with boiling eddies.

Death was written there for any living thing that should get sucked into the maw of that last chute that whirled around their ledge! A single moment of hesitation on the Indian's part, and matchwood would have been made of the canoe—and them—on those pinnacles down below!

His Lordship, after one gasping look, turned and gripped John Charley's hand strongly.

"My word, ye know! There isn't anything a fellow can say at a time like this—is there?" he cried, wringing the red man's hand.

A yell from Bob and Patroclus interrupted them both: "Look, sir! Look! We're ma-

rooned!" Bob was shouting and pointing over to the right end of their rock. On that side a smooth and shining gap of current swept by—but oh, how fast! It raced for its own ledge of the falls; it was far too wide to bridge by a canoe.

For a time they all stared at it, unable to think. It was not pleasant to have a bare rock for a home, for who could tell what period of time! About the only thing of which a fire could be made was the canoe itself. Water was plentiful—too plentiful—but how about something to eat? The idea struck them all simultaneously. They were wondering about that new problem, with nothing cheerful to recommend it, when a sullen increasing mutter of the deep tones of the falls caused them to look around inquiringly. Then John Charley pointed overhead to huge castles of black and tinted clouds rising up over the trees to the south, and there was abject fear written on his face.

"Thunder Bird, him come! Now we was

die!" he croaked, pointing at the clouds with a horny finger that shook. The craven fear in his eyes was not reassuring to see. The whites could not realize that a thunderstorm is so unusual up in the far North at this season as to be as much a cause for omens and portents to the Indian mind as an eclipse in other parts of the world, but Nishimi-wog's fear of it was sickening. The Indian had reverted to his old pagan gods. He was utterly useless to them now, for abject superstitious fear had rendered him as helpless as a mouse.

"Well," said Patroclus suddenly, "there's only one thing to do and I'm going to try it!" he declared, straightening himself with that light of high resolution in his eyes that Bob had come to know—and fear. Once Patroclus got started on anything he imagined was his duty, he was hard to stop, Bob knew, from former experiences with him down at Spanish Flats.

"I'll get in the canoe, see," said the slender idealist, "and you all give me one good shove

—the biggest shove you can—and I'll make that other bank—or go over the falls."

Bob leaped at him in protest: "Indeed you won't, old pal, not on your life!" he growled roughly yet tenderly.

"Sure I will! Nothing to it! Once over, I can throw back the tracking line and we'll all get over. Let me go, Bob. I'm the lightest and can make it if any one can—"

His Lordship planted himself between Patroclus and the canoe. He cocked both barrels of his express rifle as he grinned down at him quizzically.

"I say you won't, youngster! Not a hope! no one takes any such risks for this crowd. Man, it'd be your death—really, now, ye know!" There was an air of finality about the young Englishman that would have daunted a less sacrificial heart than Patroclus', but the boy was equally stubborn.

"Please, sir. It's the only way—" he had begun, when a sudden peal of thunder boomed and cracked in the sky, adding its din to the

ceaseless roar of the falls. Nishimi-wog groveled on the rock, making strange noises like a beast. Bob looked around anxiously. In his present mood Patroclus was sure to make a dash for the canoe and attempt the crossing unaided the first chance he got. The thunderclap gave Bob's practical mind an idea to work to. He kicked Nishimi-wog unsympathetically in the ribs: "Get up, instantly, John Charley," he barked, "and help me turn over the canoe—it's going to rain presently," he said in matter-of-fact tones.

"Pray do," grinned His Lordship, "while I watch this young fire-eater here."

They were struggling with the weight of the long, heavy craft, burdened as it was with their duffel, when Bob suddenly dropped it and ducked low under the crest of the rock himself.

"Down everybody!—Down!" he shouted, motioning to them vigorously.

Both His Lordship and Patroclus obeyed wonderingly. Bob beckoned for them to come

over to his side. Cautiously they raised their heads and peered over the edge of the rock. Down, far below the distant foot of the lower falls, a file of little forked human beings was coming out of the forest and forming in a sort of group on the pebbly shingle of the pool of the lower falls. John Charley raised his head and looked also. For once he had forgotten the Thunder Bird.

"Ugh!—Naskapi!" he grunted, his keen eyesight searching the party below. "And, dere's Antoine!—*an' M'sieu 'Lyss!*—Ugh!—Mooch bad!"

They all lowered their heads and looked at each other amazedly.

"My eye!" ejaculated His Lordship. "We've headed 'em off—but how in the world are we going to do anything practical about it?" Then he looked down at the long-range express rifle in his hands thoughtfully. "I should venture the opinion, boys, don't ye know, that the Lord has delivered the heathen into our hands, this day rather!" he grinned.

CHAPTER V

THE WAY OF THE NASKAPI

WHEN their canoe arrived back in camp Diomed hastily collected provisions and blankets and packed his ruck-sack for their overland trip. Etienne was useless to him now, sobbing and blubbering and so wrought up over the kidnaping of Antoine as to have lost his wits temporarily, for he kept urging them to start off with nothing but his rifle over his shoulder. Ulysses and Ajax were already packed and waiting for them.

"Hike, boys! Hep! Dogtrot!" ordered Diomed, taking command when the packs were slung up and the whole party had signified their readiness to go. "We can't wait for the moon. Etienne, you lead, until we get out where a fellow can see."

With rifles carried at a trail the four started along the moose track in a steady, rhythmical trot-trot-trot. The game track was well worn but narrow, and it went over little gulches and ravines which were but a stride for a moose to cross but called for careful jumping and a cessation of speed for them.

It was under a pale early moon that they at length came to the end of the moose track and stood in that long narrow trench through the spruces, the old Naskapi Fur Trail. Long ago it had been cleared, just wide enough to pass a dog team and a toboggan. High up on a dead tree they made out a deep ax blaze, cut there when men walked on snowshoes fifteen feet above the present level of the trail. The trail bottom was grown up with small birch bushes and young spruce. It was seldom traveled in the summer.

"Hi, fellows! Here's where they set the boy down!" cried out Ulysses, stooping over a sharp heel mark in the duff.

"Ah! Mon pauvre petit!" groaned Eti-

enne. Here was where Nishimi-wog was peek up de w'ite fedder—*Allons,* Messieus!"

Antoine's small hunting boots had left a well-printed spoor, noticeable on every patch of clear duff. He had been running; no doubt being dragged along by the wrist, for his toe-prints were deep and had thrown up ridges of needles. For a mile they jogged on; then even the husks slowed down. It was a terrible pace, in that rough and boggy trail, even with light twenty-pound packs.

"I move we rest five minutes and get our wind," growled Ajax, halting suddenly. They all stopped at once. Packs were cast off, foreheads mopped.

"Let's do a little figuring, now," said Ulysses. "The Indians had two hours' start, about. That means at least eight miles. They are moving fast, as Antoine's tracks show. Do you think they will stop at all to-night, Etienne?"

Etienne shook his head lugubriously. True to his Latin character, when anything affected

his emotions all his world was upside down. He needed the cheerful optimism of the Anglo-Saxon to brace him up.

"Dey no stop. Injun roon all day; roon all night; moos be," he groaned.

"But how about Antoine? The boy could not keep up any such pace," objected Ulysses.

"Dey carry heem. You was see," grunted Etienne despondently.

"On with the long-distance event then, men!" roared Ajax, springing to his feet.

Again the steady jog trot made their rapid footfalls sound as one. The moon flooded the winding reaches of the Naskapi Fur Trail with silvery light. For the most part the lane kept to wooded valleys, but they were conscious of high white granite ridges passing them, seen through vistas in the timber. Perhaps two miles further Etienne stopped with a grunt of discovery.

"*Hein?* Dey was cut poles here," he announced.

Short leafy branches strewed the trail and

in the forest two white cut stumps showed where birch poles had been hacked down. Their tops lay thrown carelessly in the bush.

"Humph! Not taking any trouble to conceal their traces!" ejaculated Ulysses. "They're depending on speed. How far is it to the Naskapi village, Etienne?"

" 'Bout forty mile, mebbe—yes, sure 'bout dat," replied the French-Canadian with something like his former ruggedness. "Dey was no keel ma boy till dey done get to dose village," he averred, confidently. "Lord Jim, he was head dem off, mebbe."

"Sure he will!" agreed Diomed, cordially. "And then we'll have 'em between two fires. C'mon, boys!"

He led the party along at a heavy trot. The trail soon began to rise, climbing up long slopes strewn with glacial bowlders in the moonlight. Then woods appeared in a valley again and the road dipped, to skirt the shores of a lonely little lake dropped here into the lap of the Laurentians.

"We was oop in the Height of Land, now," said Etienne. "Dees pond was be called Wamokwa Lake."

"Why Wamokwa? Who named it?" demanded Ulysses, as they all paused to look at it curiously.

It was a weird and utterly wild little sheet of water. Across from them the opposite wall rose sheer in a grand cliff of red granite. Ice action had split the living rock asunder here, in some forgotten period, and the pieces of that great rock avalanche had fallen into the lake and now formed little islands on which grew small spruces. But the flat red wall rose for three hundred feet, a great barrier to the north, crowned with stunted pines and cedars.

Etienne crossed himself superstitiously. "I was 'fred be here myself," he confessed, unblushingly. "Injun ghosts was leev here. You nevvaire hear of Wamokwa, de W'ite Medicine Bear of de Naskapi?"

"Does he live here too?" grinned Ajax, in-

credulous amusement written broadly on his unemotional face.

"Heem was *white!*" declared Etienne impressively, as if that oddity were enough to endow the creature with supernatural powers.

"What? Polar bear, so far south as this?" objected Ulysses.

"No polar bear. Heem was white black bear. Me, Ah'll seen de track of it. He leev here," shivered Etienne, lowering his voice superstitiously.

The boys guffawed. "But it *may* be true," put in Diomed. "I've read somewhere of albino black bears having been seen—on the Flathead in Montana, it was! It is a great species for freak coloration, you know."

"De Naskapi t'ink heem was hwoods god. When dey see dat Medicine Bear eet is sign of war," said Etienne, reverently.

Truly their *habitant* guide was more than half wild! His Jesuit piety had not prevented him from imbibing beliefs in the red gods of his Indian neighbors too!

"War is right—if we ever get a sight of him!" retorted Diomed thumbing his rifle hammer. "Gee, what a trophy! Well, let's on, fellows."

He rose, stifling a groan of weariness, and pushed on. The trail led them into a sort of dark tunnel through a swampy tangle on the lake shore, filled with fallen and molding trees, with immense hemlock trunks towering up into the night. Then it began to climb the rocky banks of the west slopes of the lake shore. A moonlight glade came, where some big wind-thrown tree had cleared an opening in the timber.

"Wait a minute, fellows!" called out Ulysses' voice, hastily. "By George!—there are no more footprints on the trail!"

They stopped and searched the needly bottom of the trail carefully. It was virgin, not traveled for some months. No bent blade of grass, no disturbed stone, no print in the earth could be discovered. Antoine had been made to walk at intervals, but now there was no sign

of his boot heel. The party of Naskapi had vanished!

Diomed sat down abruptly, his weary body crying out in protest. When a fellow had been paddling and hunting all day and then had run half the night through a bumpy and uneven wilderness trail, it was time to call a halt somewhere! His nature was the kind that brooks no check. To push it through and finish it in one whack was his ideal. He had been secretly hoping that they would catch up with these Naskapi, and his biceps ached for the free-for-all scrap that would ensue if he were permitted to have his way! This sudden ending of everything in nothingness rather took the wind out of his sails. He threw himself back, tired out, and let the others decide what next.

Ajax and Ulysses were still fresh. They had rested all day in camp, and a problem like this was just the sort of thing that Ulysses' keen mind delighted in.

"It's either an ambush or a scheme to get

off the trail and rest," he declared. "They must be just as tired as we are."

"Let 'em amb!" yawned Diomed, sleepily. "We'll stay right here for their party. I wish they'd come!"

Ajax grinned and sat down beside him, fingering his rifle hammer lovingly. The two husks would have liked nothing better than an ambush to be sprung, any old ambush and plenty of it! They would sit right there and shoot; it could not turn out better for them!

"Well, you two hold the fort," smiled Ulysses down at them, "Etienne and I will do a little ambushing of our own."

They set off back down the trail. It was not long before Ulysses stopped and pointed out a slender birch growing under the big timber between the trail and the shore of the pond. The thing looked unnaturally bent. A few steps into the bush brought them to its trunk.

"Here's how they got away, Etienne; see the marks of climbing on the white powdery

bark? They bent it over the trail and were lifted over here, one by one."

"Bah gosh, dat was so!" grunted the guide. "Here was ma boy's foots—*mon Dieu!*"

He pointed down to a print of Antoine's heel in the duff. From there they traced the tracks to the lake shore. Wading along and scanning each possible landing place carefully, they soon came around the lake to a ledge at the base of the great red wall.

"They *can't* have climbed this wall, you know," whispered Ulysses, "but here's where they went up the hill, I'll bet! Look for a track in behind these bushes."

Parting them, the whole ruse became plain. Once climbing the hill, the Naskapi had given no further thought to concealment. Up and up over the high shoulder they had gone, leaving prints in the soil, dislodged stones, bent bushes. High above the lake in the white moonlight Ulysses and Etienne climbed after them. Up on the plateau the tracks disappeared immediately. Ordinary walking in

that dry duff would leave no print. They cast about aimlessly for some time, working gradually down into a deep and rocky ravine. It was blocked on the east by a huge granite slope which evidently formed the crest of the wall overlooking the lake. In back here Nature had been at work on her usual giant scale, for huge bowlders and slabs of granite had been pried off the cliff walls by ice action to tumble down and fill this gorge.

They were searching for tracks in between the bowlders when Etienne suddenly halted and sniffed the air, crossing himself superstitiously: "De W'ite Bear den—I smell heem, me!" His voice shook. "Here was de home of de W'ite Bear; I go no furder!"

"Shucks! C'mon, Etienne—what are you scared of?" snorted Ulysses, pushing through the rocks with his rifle at ready. "I'd like to see that freak animal myself."

He had no more than gotten the words out when a startled *Whoof!* came from somewhere on ahead. A rank musky odor and the smell

of old dead flesh drifted down the cañon. Ulysses ran forward a few paces, but Etienne hung back and muttered *Aves* to himself.

A crash in the timber. Ulysses looked up to see a large white animal ambling swiftly up over the rocks, breaking dead timber as he ran. It was a bear, by the high clumsy-looking gallop of his hind legs, but he appeared silvery white in the moonlight. Ulysses dashed forward for a better sight, then raised his rifle, hesitated a moment, and his bear was gone.

"The White Bear of the Naskapi!" he muttered to himself. "So he's real, eh?"

"Why you no shoot?" asked Etienne in an awed voice, coming up reluctantly. "You was scared too?"

"No; because I did not want to give our party away, see?" said Ulysses calmly. "Nice trophy—but, you see, if the Naskapi heard my shot they'd be warned and start off again in a rush. There *is* no ambush, Etienne! That climb up the hill proved that. The Naskapi

are camped somewhere near here, and they will hit the trail early in the morning. We'd better go back and get some sleep."

He was about to turn away, when a still more overpowering stench in the breeze caused him to stifle a sneeze and stop.

"Might as well see the cave, while I'm here," he muttered. A few steps more brought him in front of it. Black and mysterious, it yawned above them in the rocks. In front of it was a whole votive-offering shop of Indian fetishes. Medicine bundles, bunches of feathers swaying in the moonlight, prayer sticks, oak-framed papoose carriers, a broken toboggan, curiously marked skins of animals, warped snowshoes of the round Naskapi type, once gaudy with feathers, now faded and dusty —for years the cave had been a shrine to the Naskapi.

Old Brains stood and surveyed that cave with the keenest interest. A knotty mystery like this whole business gave him the sort of mental exercise his mind delighted in. It was

a chess problem on a grand scale and Ulysses was good at chess and never more dangerous than after you had caught his queen. Why had the Naskapi instead of the Montaignais kidnaped Antoine? Why did they leave the Fur Trail at Wamokwa's cave? What had they to do with Nagushwa? The affair bristled with questions like these, and Ulysses had no answers as yet. And it was characteristic of him that the most important question of all, Why did the Naskapi leave no scouts on their back trail, or had they? never occurred to him at all.

He was all for solving the motive back of this kidnaping. That they should have taken the boy *and* the locket seemed reasonable enough when old Brains began to put two and two together. To make him open it, of course. It had killed every Montaignais who tried to get at what was in it; therefore let the white boy do it for them. But why the Naskapi? Ulysses knew that they were a wild and primitive northern tribe, not at all exer-

cised about lands or hunting grounds, for they roamed over the whole of north Labrador, as far as the Esquimos on the north and the Montaignais on the south. If Nagushwa held an old deed that antedated Frontenac's grant, that might be of the utmost interest to the semi-tame Montaignais, but it could not concern the Naskapi much.

Ulysses grinned cheerfully as these thoughts whisked through his nimble mind. He was getting on with the mystery, just like Sherlock Holmes! The motive must be a debt of some kind, he decided. Antoine was to be delivered to some chief of the Montaignais, otherwise the Naskapi would have forced him to open the locket long before, if left to themselves. Why did they turn off at Wamokwa's cave, then? A rendezvous, evidently. Also it suggested to Ulysses that Wamokwa himself had something to do with Nagushwa, for the debt was to be paid at his cave. Ulysses left off his game of inductive logic at this point and began to study the cave for more

information to go on. Black in the moonlight it yawned before him, its depths invisible. Ulysses felt in his pocket for the scrap of candle he always carried, called up the superstitious Etienne guardedly, and then lit the candle back in the depths of the cave. A flat wall of stratified rock made the back of it, with huge flat shelf leaning out at a slight angle overhead. Under foot was soft dry dust, scooped and scratched with bear-claw marks, quite evidently the place where Wamokwa holed up for his nightly sleep.

Ulysses swung the candle around, scrutinizing the walls. They were covered with Indian picture writing, and, in irregular lines, characters composed of curious hooks and angles, dots and slanting strokes.

"Bah gosh, M'sieu, Ah'll know dat writin'," said Etienne excitedly. "Heem was de Cree alphabet. Everybody can read heem, from Athabasca Landing to Labrador."

Ulysses knew of this alphabet, invented by

a missionary many years before. By it all the Crees, eastern and western, learned to read and write in one day's study. A sort of syllabic shorthand, good for either English or Cree, but better for the latter. However, he did not encourage Etienne to try just yet, for the pictures seemed to tell a story of themselves. There was a group consisting of a large black bear and a small white one in its paw, some Indian figures, and a crude drawing in white clay of a round object hanging from a necklace. That group looked promising! The small white bear was surely Wamokwa himself, when a cub, and the round object was Nagushwa. A trade of some kind was pictured here. It all seemed logical to Ulysses. The wild Naskapi would prefer a medicine animal to a gold bauble in which they had no particular interest. Apparently the Montaignais had once found a black bear with a white cub, and some pact had been made with the Naskapi giving them the cub in return for their securing Nagush-va for the

Montaignais. That much Ulysses guessed from the picture drawing.

"Read what it says under this, Etienne," he demanded of the *habitant.*

Etienne began to mutter to himself in Cree.

"Heem was say Montaignais geev dat Wamokwa to dem Naskapi long tam ago, M'sieu. Dey was mak stole Nagushwa, but dat Nagushwa heem was be keep at St. Césare, on'stand? When ma boy Antoine come be confirm by de Curé we geev him dat Nagushwa—"

"So they never got a chance at it until lately, eh? That explains a whole lot!" exulted Ulysses. "And now you were taking it back to the Curé again, eh?"

"*Sacré nom!* Moos be!" came back Etienne warmly, crossing himself. "Dat Nagushwa, heem keel Tawbisnay las' week. An' now dey was stole ma Antoine!"

The *habitant* seemed on the point of blubbering afresh so Ulysses led him on with the quest hastily.

"Remains to find out where is Antoine now," he went on cheerily. "Here! Here's new writing, fresh! See the wet daubs of clay. Everything that ever happened to the Naskapi appears to be written down here, I declare!"

"Moos be," said Etienne lugubriously. "De great Medicine Bear. Heem was be mark by Naniboujou, de Great Spirit," he explained reverently. "You M'sieus no keel Wamokwa," he beseeched earnestly. "De Naskapi dey go on warpath, sure 'bout dat!"

Ulysses felt that that would be a bad move, no matter how desirable he might be as a trophy. If they could recover Antoine and perhaps the locket they were well out of it. But where was the boy now?

The new picture writing was undecipherable to him, but Etienne groaned afresh as he studied it. It showed a human figure, crudely drawn, with lines for arms and legs and body. Its right hand held the locket. A burning fire showed near by and under the bent knees

of the figure were two round black balls on sticks.

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!" sobbed Etienne afresh. "Ma boy nevvaire walk again, M'sieu! Dey was give him de clay ball torture, so mak heem open dat Nagushwa! *Oh, Sacré!"*

His wails resembled the moans of some stricken animal. It was all Ulysses could do to prevent Etienne from dashing off into the forest. He finally calmed the distracted *habitant* enough to get an explanation from him. It seemed that this torture consisted in heating clay balls scalding hot and doubling up the knees of the victim over them so that fearful pain was inflicted and unless he gave in swiftly the ligaments under the knee would be ruined forever. Ulysses gasped with compassion as Etienne blubbered out this barbarous invention. Then he checked him reassuringly.

"Hold on, old man! It's not so bad—not yet! Here are the balls, right now!"

He spun Etienne around. Amid the other relics and votive offerings were two fresh ones,

two large clay balls, moist and new, on sticks. For some obscure reason the Naskapi had not proceeded with the torture until Wamọkwa himself had given some sign in connection with them. Evidently it was their intention to return here by daylight, when their Medicine Men would proclaim whether or no the White Bear approved. The thing was baffling to Ulysses' logical mind, a glimpse of the abysmal superstition of the wilder red men, but it at least gave him a practical thing to work on. He straightened himself for action.

"It's all right, Etienne!" he declared confidently. "Nothing has been done yet with your boy. It will be hopeless for us to try to find their camp to-night, but this we *can* do; go back and wake up the husks, and all of us ambush them when they come back here to-morrow. Let's go!"

"Bah gosh, suh, dat's right—sure 'bout dat!" returned Etienne brightening up. "To-morrow Ah'll brek dem Naskapi in pieces, me! You was see!" he growled fiercely shaking his

burly fists. "Ah'll mak dem all hairs an' blood!"

Ulysses laughed and started to retrace his way back to the Fur Trail. He had hardly gone a dozen yards from the cave before a sudden violent rush was made at him from the bushes on each side. Fierce and sinewy fingers pinned his arms, and a dirty bandanna was whipped across his mouth. He struggled with all his strength, while pangs of dismay shot through him as he realized that with all that exercise of mental keenness he had overlooked the most important fact of all—that the Naskapi had left scouts to watch their back trail! Behind him he heard Etienne grunting like a bull and striking right and left with his fists. The *habitant* had been far quicker with his bodily reaction than he had been. A prodigious struggle was going on back there, silent and determined on the Naskapi's part, full of deep *habitant* oaths from Etienne. Then there was a crash in the bushes, stifled groans, sounds of pursuit grow-

ing fainter and fainter. Ulysses had ceased to struggle. He had no wind, and could hardly breathe through that stifling bandanna. The hands that held him were of iron. He realized with bitterness of soul that the Brains, as the Trojans called him, was a prisoner of the Naskapi, for all his keen mind. Also that the Brains alone held the key to all this mystery from start to finish. Then he was led off, walking sullenly and thinking hard, up a stony trail that led to the rocky heights above.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIGHT AT THE WATERFALL

"WAK'! Wak' oop, M'sieus! M'sieu 'Lyss was be tooken!" The husks rolled up out of a snoring sleep. When Diomed found his wits his first thought was to belabor Ajax and kick him vigorously.

"Get up, fathead! Asleep at the switch! What sort of a sentinel are you, anyway!" he roared, punching the bewildered Ajax. "What's the matter, Etienne? Where's 'Lyss?" he asked fatuously.

"Tooken. De Naskapi," repeated Etienne breathlessly. "Me, Ah'll poonch an' poonch, an' was gat away. Coom, M'sieus!"

They grabbed their rifles and shouldered their packs to follow him, while Etienne told

in disjointed, breathless sentences the story of the visit to the cave of Wamokwa. Diomed growled wrathfully. "Let me at 'em, boys! Let me at 'em—that's all!" he kept repeating. He swung his rifle unheeded in his left hand while his right fist clenched menacingly. In a fight Diomed always dropped everything and took to his fists. Ajax had turned his rifle around and was wielding it now as a sort of club. Neither of them had the least idea of shooting anybody. The haymaker to the jaw, the swat of a gun butt, were what they both rejoiced in. Once in sight of the Naskapi camp, there would be doings of sheer muscular force that meant broken heads for some one!

Etienne tracked his route back direct from the Fur Trail through the timber toward the hill with the cliff overlooking the lake on which he knew Wamokwa's cave was located. His woods caution had returned to him at length, for, with Indian antagonists, nothing could be done save by quiet and stealth. It was his

plan, he explained to the impatient Diomed, to get there silently, without breaking a stick if possible, and then either try to track Ulysses or else wait for daylight to carry out the original plan of Ulysses and ambush the Naskapi at the bear cave.

"Huh!" said Ajax. "You just show us their camp, that's all! Di and I are right hungry to smack somebody!" He waggled his gunstock like a baseball bat.

"*Ah non,* M'sieus!" remonstrated Etienne. "Moos be dat we was wait. Me, Ah'll 'fred for ma boy Antoine. Dey keel heem if we roosh dat camp. No can find, too; sure 'bout dat. M'sieu 'Lyss, he right!"

The husks sighed. Hiding around the bear cave until daylight did not suit their impetuous natures at all! But Old Brains was right, as usual, for here were three strong men and to let the Naskapi come to the cave in the morning and perform any ceremonial deviltry they had in mind would give the three burly ones all the advantage of a sudden surprise

attack in which much might be gained and many heads broken. They agreed to Etienne's plan and followed him through the woods as quietly as they could.

After a time the heavy timber gave way to bushy and rocky uplands, with bare and broken granite cliffs all about. The moon had set in the west and all was dim and blurred under the light of the waning stars. A faint paling in the east told them that the long northern twilight of dawn had begun. Ajax and Diomed looked about wonderingly as Etienne led them through those rocky heights by many a detour, never once using any trail, occasionally crossing the one there was to scan it carefully for footprints. Neither Antoine's nor Ulysses' boot heel was to be discovered there. The Naskapi were still in their camp, wherever that was.

Finally they reached the environs of the cave. Etienne proceeded with extreme caution, stopping to look and listen for long periods. Then, like shadows, they moved on.

The mouth of the cave yawned before them now, black and mysterious. Etienne motioned to certain bowlders flanking it. The husks brightened up as visions of pouncing out on the Naskapi with fists and gun butts from behind them loomed up attractively. They sought shelter in the clefts with grins of anticipation, while Etienne picked a spot for himself in a cleft above the roof of the cave. His plan was evidently to fall on them out of the clouds, as it were, punching and kicking. "I go *woof!* lak dat bear; dat was signal," he whispered to them.

For a time there was naught but a brooding silence over all the wilderness, broken only by Etienne's thick breathing; the deep, still silence of incipient dawn. Then a dog fox yapped a short distance up the gorge. Another dog fox answered him from the rocky pinnacles below them. Still another barked off in the woods. Then an utter silence.

"M'sieus!" came Etienne's whisper, "he was

no good! When de dog fox bark, de vixen answer. Dem was Injuns."

Ajax thought and puzzled over their dilemma uneasily. The process was difficult in the extreme for him. They were discovered and watched, quite evidently, and their ambush idea was no good. What to do now? Ajax cudgeled his brains and scratched vigorously in his hair. And what did those fox signals mean? Were they about to be ambushed themselves? At the wily game of wood craft he and Diomed, and Etienne too, were no better than babies compared to the Naskapi! Ajax had few ideas and most of them born of infinite travail of thought, but one of them stuck fast now, and it was that this playing the Indian's game was not for him and Di. They would have to get out of here and do something entirely different.

Then he had a grand idea, one that left him somewhat breathless with the novelty of it, however easily it might have occurred to the crafty Ulysses. It was this: the Naskapi

would have to hit the Fur Trail to-morrow; why not sneak away from here and get on the trail ahead of them? Then, when they came along, make their pounce and rescue Antoine and the Brains!

He crawled along the ground to Diomed's rock and called down Etienne in a guarded whisper.

"It's this way, fellows," he said when the *habitant* had joined them. "Our scheme's gone ka-flooey, see? They're on to us, but I have a hunch that they will not come here at all, now. They'll start right off on the march, right now, and pull off their torture stunt on Antoine, and probably 'Lyss also, somewhere else. It's up to us to beat them to it and get on the Fur Trail ahead of them, when we can pick our place to light into 'em. Huh?"

"Dey was no coom here now," agreed Etienne. "Injun no lak fight. Dey roon. Coom, M'sieus, moos be dat we go fast."

He had decided with the swift logic of the man of the woods. It remained only to get

away with sufficient stealth to leave the Naskapi scouts under the impression that they were still at the cave. Etienne proceeded to put that into action, for, silently pointing to a huge and blurred mass of rocks to the west as a rendezvous, he dropped on the ground and disappeared from sight. Ajax and Diomed separated and each began his own crawl.

They had gone perhaps fifty yards and were getting on with it famously when a low and scornful laugh from somewhere up in the heights rang out and then the vigorous hooting of a barred owl. Ajax cursed silently and made for the rendezvous in desperate haste. Even this maneuver of theirs had been seen! There was only one thing to do now, to get to the Fur Trail first and then fall on the Naskapi the instant they came along.

The woods seemed full of hooting owls as he met Diomed rising out of the bushes and found Etienne waiting for them under the shadow of a great split cliff. Without a word they

followed him on the run, and presently came upon a trail that led west. Etienne was breathing heavily and he ran silently along it, his moccasined feet making not a sound. They broke out on the Fur Trail at a fast trot by the time it became light enough to see. No fresh tracks were in it, but they had the game in their own hands now.

"It's this way, fellows!" exulted Ajax. "If we find no tracks ahead, they are still in the woods, see, and if they don't come along presently we'll know they have gone to the cave and can catch 'em there. Either way we've got 'em."

"Dey no go to dat cave!" Etienne was shaking his head vigorously. "Injuns was 'fred of de Mounted Police lak everyteeng. Dey no do nothing to ma boy here. How dey know we was not de Police? Me feel pooty good, me! Roon, M'sieus!"

They dashed along the Trail, watching its grassy width carefully for fresh footprints. A quarter of a mile further Etienne stopped

with a grunt of dismay. "Too late, M'sieus! We was not queek 'nuff. Bah gosh, here was ma Antoine, an' M'sieu 'Lyss too!"

Fresh tracks filled the Trail. Antoine's small boot heel; Ulysses' cruiser moccasins; about a dozen in-toed prints of Indian feet.

"Two Montaignais, nine Naskapi was be," declared Etienne, after a hasty examination of the moccasin prints. "We roon, M'sieus! Hurry, *mon Dieu!*"

Down into a deep and swampy valley and then up on to a high and barren country strewn thick with great white bowlders the Fur Trail led, with as yet no view of the Indians. They must have broken camp with celerity and hit the trail by a short cut known to them at least half an hour before Etienne and the husks had, Diomed figured.

A mile further on Etienne stopped and pointed down at the earth before their feet. "Look—de track of de W'ite Bear, M'sieus!" he grunted.

Deep prints, like some crooked-palmed hand

crossed the Fur Trail, but in the place of fingers were five long claw marks, all bunched together.

"Black bear, all right!" said Diomed. "I've followed 'em too often in the South not to know. So he's white, eh, Etienne?"

"Yaas, de great Medicine Bear of de Naskapi. Naniboujou, de Great Spirit, was mark heem," said Etienne reverently. "You no shoot heem, M'sieus! Naskapi coom mooch mad."

"Let's try a trot, fellows," said Ajax listening impatiently, for Etienne seemed almost a pagan airing these "views" and he was not impressed with the importance of the White Bear. "They can't be far ahead of us now."

They broke into a run, toiling up the slope of a huge ridge that cut off the sky ahead. Near its summit Etienne slowed down and they all waited while he went on alone to reconnoiter over the brink. Then he waved vigorously for them to come ahead.

Down below them lay a wooded valley, and

at one point, rising like a scar through the trees, a bare streak of the Fur Trail showed. As they watched it the party of Naskapi came in sight, hastening up it in single file, though they seemed merely crawling at that distance. They could even make out Antoine's little figure, led along by a thong no doubt, and with him the luckless Brains.

"Two miles ahead," declared Ajax. "There they both are! We'll get 'em, fellows!"

They could hardly wait for the Indians to disappear around the bend in the trees. An hour later—it was nearly noon—and they had come up that scar themselves. It gave on a ridge, where another lookout could be had over the country. Etienne stopped and pointed to the west, where dark and massive thunderheads were rising over the horizon. He shook his head and crossed himself as a vivid lightning flash cleft the bank of clouds.

"Tonnerre!—Sacré!" he exclaimed, hoarsely, in awed tones.

"Huh? What's eatin' you now, old-timer?"

growled Ajax. "It's just an ordinary thunderstorm coming up."

"Mon dieu, non!" retorted Etienne vehemently. *"Tonnerre,* she was nevvair coom—dis tam of year—not once in t'irty year, mebbe. De Naskapi was t'ink heem T'under Bird coom now. *Sacré!* Ah'll not know *what* dey do with ma boy!" he blubbered.

The despair in his tones was very real and it quelled a laugh that had arisen over those vague Indian superstitions that the unusual thunderstorm might inflame. The husks realized dimly the seriousness of it all. They raced along the path, urged on by forebodings of what was soon to happen to Ulysses and the young *habitant* boy—for this omen of the Thunder Bird would undoubtedly encourage the Naskapi to decisive action.

The Fur Trail dipped down into a hollow in the bare hills and rose again rapidly to a sky line. They all quickened their pace, eager to learn what might be on the other side of that bowldered ridge. As they topped the rise,

Diomed stopped and pointed. Far below them was a dense, wooded valley, dark green with the thick spires of black spruce. Water flowed down there, for white mist rose over the forest at its deepest part. The shelter of this deep ravine had given the forest trees a chance to survive.

"*Chute à pic*—how you call heem—waterfall, dere," announced Etienne, "beeg wan—mooch mist! Hurry, M'sieus!"

They trotted down into the valley. Soon the path was threading through dense walls of spruce, and what had been a faint whisper of falling waters now rang in a deep muttered growl in their ears. Occasionally a heavier cannonade of thunder boomed out, mingling with and accentuating the roar of the falls. At sound of it Etienne burst into as fast a run as his short heavy legs would permit. The others loped on after him easily.

Louder and more terrible and menacing became the roar of the cataract. They were passing somewhere below it, they judged

by the sound. Then Etienne stopped and held out his arm. A gleam of agitated water showed up ahead in a cleft in the trail. The Trojans gathered in a knot behind him while he stepped forward cautiously. The dense bush thinned out. Through the tree trunks they could now see the swirling waters of a dark pool, eddying and boiling in a wide whirlpool. At a sign from Etienne they crept into the underbrush and pushed through to where they could look out.

Above them thundered a mighty cataract, a whole river falling in a shaggy white veil into the black and boiling pool before them. The deep boom of it drowned every other sound. Above it was an upper fall, seemingly noiseless, its own thunder obliterated by the grand turmoil of the lower falls. Beyond that, sharp and white against the black pall of the thunder clouds, was a long granite rock, curiously knobbed with what looked like four immovable bowlders. On both sides of the gap rose green tufts of trees and walls of cliffs.

Diomed watched the mighty scene above him, fascinated, before he gave the lower pool so much as a thought. Etienne was nudging him vigorously and as Diomed looked he pointed across the pool from them. A gray beach of flat pebbles inclosed the lower pool of the falls and on it were gathered the whole band of the Naskapi. Some were making incantations to the approaching thundercloud; more of them were gathered in a knot behind their chief, near whom lay a great bare trunk that sloped down the beach and jutted out into the whirlpool made by the falling torrent.

"Ah Sacré! M'sieus! Look! Look! *Diable!"* gasped Etienne, bounding to his feet. Diomed restrained him for an instant to get a grip on the situation himself.

A single human figure was kneeling out on the end of that trunk, begging, beseeching, pleading. It was young Antoine, Diomed saw, and he was holding Nagushwa in one hand while with the other he gripped a short stub that helped him maintain a precarious footing.

A stout and burly chief, wrapped in a white blanket with wide blue borders that fell below his knees, was haranguing the boy fiercely, but Antoine kept shaking his head stubbornly. Immediately, at a sign from the chief, two strong bucks began slowly to roll the log. It swayed from side to side in the current, while Antoine waved his free hand with Nagushwa in it at them in terror, but he would not give in. Diomed grasped his fearful dilemma instantly. To fall off the log into the whirlpool would sweep him to death under the falls; for him to attempt to open the locket would be equally fatal!

Diomed rolled up his sleeves and passed his rifle to Etienne: "Shoot, if they get ugly. I'm going out there," he growled.

Totally unarmed, his burly figure raced out of the bushes and crossed the beach toward the Naskapi. A vigorous yell from him attracted their attention. The chief signaled the two men at the log to stop and turned to face him. Diomed gave him not so much as a word but

strode by him, his fists clenched, and made for the two bucks at the log end.

"Beat it! *Move!* Before I hurt you!" he yelled, charging at them in the boxer's crouch.

An angry bravado of grunts answered him —but Diomed's fist shot out and one buck was driven sprawling across the strand. The other backed off, then turned and ran for his weapons as a peal of thunder crashed out overhead. The reverberations of it came tumbling about their ears. Diomed stood guarding the end of the log, while Antoine crawled back to safety. War-whoops rang in the universal bellow of the falls. The Naskapi leaped in a disorderly mob for their trade muskets, which, carelessly, had been left standing in the timber. Then they came back toward him, threatening and angry.

Diomed turned to face them fearlessly, with Antoine at his back. He held up his hand for them to stop: "The first buck who starts anything I'll sure wear him out!" he rasped, stepping forward, his fierce eyes seeking out

one after another of the party. "Where's the other white man?" They recoiled a little. This fist-swinging white youth reminded them altogether too much of the ways of the Mounted Police. Again came a crash of thunder, and a piercing war yell went up. A musket was cocked and pointed. Diomed rushed for the man, another stumbled back against him as his iron fist knocked him down, and the gun went off, hitting nobody. At the same instant men seemed falling on the Naskapi out of the skies, for blows that drove the Indians spinning seemed raining upon them from every quarter. Etienne and Ajax had crept around through the timber and fallen on them from the rear at the moment of Diomed's rush. There were surprised screeches, guns flew harmlessly on the stones, a mêlée of lunging and striking whites and writhing and twisting Naskapi. Out of it squirmed the chief, yelling for his followers. They drew off, some still armed with their trade muskets, some flashing out knives. Three of them lay

stunned and unconscious on the strand, where Ajax's ungentle gun butt had tapped them.

There was a short breathing truce. The whites drew slowly back with Antoine toward their weapons, for the Indians looked ugly and full of fight. As for Ulysses, they had discovered him—tied firmly to a tree, his mouth gagged, his black slanting eyes glinting at them indignantly. The Brains was almost funny in his present predicament and Diomed laughed as he faced the Indians figuring out how to knock down two of them at once in a rush for Ulysses.

Then a Naskapi yelled and pointed up at the cliffs back of them. All eyes followed his finger. High up on the ledge above stood Wamokwa, the White Bear—the Medicine Bear of the Naskapi. Accustomed to a life-long immunity, he swayed stolidly on his pinnacle, his muzzle snuffing the tainted air that came up to him.

"*Sacré!*—Heem was mean war!—Moos be we fight with rifles!" barked Etienne, who was

the first to grasp the full significance of it.

The chief glanced up at the Wamokwa a moment, then grunted passionately, cocked his musket and aimed it at Diomed.

The burly youth made for him defiantly. "Shoot, Indian—you'll get hung for it! Better drop it" he yelled, and then charged.

Whatever the outcome, a sharp crash of a rifle bellowed out from somewhere up in the falls, keen as the crack of a whip above the tumult of the waters. There came a fast, tearing sound as if one had ripped a yard of cloth, and then a shower of stones flew up from the track and pelted the chief with stinging violence. He turned and fell, a hand to his temple. Every one looked up at the top of the falls from whence had come the shot.

On the knife edge of the granite rock above the topmost brink now stood four human figures. The black outlines of rifles crossed their forked silhouettes, and one of them was aiming. Then came a puff of smoke. The bullet ripped through the air high above their

heads. It sang like a bee and there came a dull smack, instantly followed by a squall of rage and pain. They looked up on the cliffs above them—to see the White Bear tumbling, falling, clawing at the spruces, dropping down from crag to ledge, to fall with a ponderous thud into the thick timber near them.

Grunts of rage and dismay came from the Naskapi. Their great Medicine Bear had been shot!

The chief gave one wild look around—at the four figures standing grimly on the rock above but easily within rifle range, at the silent knot of whites before him, with Antoine and Etienne now both carrying rifles, at the place where the sacred Medicine Bear had fallen to his death—and then in a hoarse chorus of grunts the Naskapi all turned and bolted incontinently into the forest, to vanish instantly from sight.

For some moments the unbroken thunder of the falls alone held entire sway over the scene.

"Well—and that's that!" gritted Diomed, grimly. He had not moved from his tracks since the chief's gun bore on him, and he was still unarmed. He drew his hunting knife and freed Ulysses in two vigorous slashes. Then he waved to the four figures up on the rock, who waved their rifles hilariously back at him.

CHAPTER VII

WAMOKWA, THE WHITE BEAR

THAT mighty cascade of La Rivière du Nord dominated everything. Its portentous voice drowned every other sound, so that signaling was futile, and its boiling mists again and again obliterated the little group of pygmy humans standing up on the granite knife-edge beyond the brink of the upper falls. It was difficult to translate their waving arms into any sort of intelligible message. That they were His Lordship, Bob, Patroclus and Nishimi-wog there could be no shadow of doubt, but what they wanted and why they did not leave the rock and come down, the Trojans watching them from the strand of the lower falls pool could not understand.

And, while attempting some sort of com-

munication, Naniboujou, the Great Spirit of the North, took that thundercloud and emptied it upside down over the entire scene. The rain came down in sheets; thunder roared and cannonaded in the cliffs; the falls took on an awful sublimity, sheeted in torrents of falling rain, yet themselves falling, falling, endlessly in an intolerable roar, the whole body of the river leaping down in sheets of foam.

The Trojans gathered, soaked and shivering, under a large spruce and watched the tremendous spectacle, overwhelmed, while Ulysses told them of his adventures at the cave of Wamokwa. "Bad business killing that bear, you'll see, boys," he concluded, "we'll have *both* the Naskapi and Montaignais to deal with now, Wamokwa *and* Nagushwa!" The rest, fascinated by the spectacle before them, could not yet feel the situation as he did. It was Etienne, himself the most familiar with the sterner moods of Nature, who was the first to speak of the practical bearings of this thunderstorm upon them:

"Mooch bad! Dese was mooch bad, for Lord Jeem an' dem boys, up dere," he said, shaking his head ominously.

"Shucks, Etienne!" retorted Ulysses. "They're better off than we are. They have the canoe and can turn it over and lie under it and let her rain."

"Bah gosh, boy, you know not'ing 'bout dese kan of rivers!" cried Etienne. "Heem was rise of it, ten, mebbe, twenty feet in dese rains. Dey was to be wash off dat rock over de falls, sure!" he prophesied forebodingly.

The Trojans looked at each other with an alarm that all the terrific voices of Nature had not yet been able to awaken. What Etienne had said might be only too true. In twenty minutes more, even, of this cloud-burst, the river would become a raging torrent that no man dare remain near. The very strand that they were on would be inundated, swept by a rabble of logs and floating driftwood, combed by strumming waves that would engulf them all.

"Don't you think they will realize that and get off the rock before it is too late, Etienne?" asked Diomed.

"Nishimi-wog, heem know," replied Etienne. "But I t'ink, me, dat dey no *can* get off. I saw mooch water on bose sides of dem rock befo' de rain was come."

"That settles it. That's what they were signaling when the rain hid them from us!" declared Ajax, springing to his feet. "C'mon, fellows, it's up to us. We've got to get up there somehow and *take* them off."

Out into the downpour they plunged. The woods were filled with rain haze, were inconceivably wet, and each surcharged bough shed ice-cold sluices of water which their clothes soaked up like a sponge. Up and up the huge shoulder around the edge of the falls they climbed, torn with anxiety, reckless with haste, calling to each other above the shouting din of the falls, ducking involuntarily at the pealing crashes of thunder overhead. The whole basin of the falls was filled with boiling steam like a

caldron. You could see nothing out there. More than once the party found themselves wandering dangerously over to the edge. Then at last Ajax and Diomed, who were leading, yelled to the others and pointed to a white foam of waters racing past them below. Through the bushes and tree trunks they could now make out the upper river flowing past, its surface stippled with the deluge of raindrops. Logs, roots, branches, borne on its current, shot past, to plunge with a dull boom over the brink of the insatiable upper falls.

Diomed shouted across to the granite ledge as they burst through the brush and gathered on a rocky promontory which jutted out opposite to it. Already the water had risen three feet, and it laved and lapped hungrily around what was left of the rock. The canoe lay turned over on the highest part of the ledge; evidently those under it were watching toward the lower pool, hoping against hope for the rain to lift.

Then a head poked out from under its

gunwale on their side. The face was Bob's. They could see his mouth forming in a shout of relief, and then the canoe rose and turned over while all four jumped to their feet, capering and yelling with delight. They saw John Charley jump for the bow of the canoe, and presently he straightened up with a coil of its tracking rope in his hands. He was about to attempt a first cast with it when Etienne roared out a fearful cry and pointed upstream. A great tree trunk was bobbing down toward the rock, heading for it viciously, its roots rolling and turning like writhing tentacles as it charged down on the rock. It struck the granite with a dull boom and rode up on the slope. Lord Jim leaped and dodged it, while Nishimi-wog and Bob and Patroclus seized the canoe gunwale to prevent it being butted bodily off the rock. The eager current swept the tree's upper branches around and then all their hearts went to their throats as its roots churned and twisted across the rock, sweeping everything before them. For a tense instant

Bob was caught in the tangle, but the others dragged him out of danger.

The tree top swung around in a vast circle and jammed hard against their own rock promontory, while the Trojans dodged broken branches hurled all about them. Then they all howled with joy, for it looked like a most providential natural bridge. They saw that His Lordship was for climbing across it immediately but John Charley was holding him back by main force. The two struggled and fought on the rocks. Even while rashness and experience were fighting there for the mastery, the river backed up and cascaded over the tree trunk in a white deluge. Driftwood piled against it in a rapidly forming dam, and then, with a dull crack, the trunk parted in two and both ends swept on down, to uprear and plunge over the falls. Nothing could stop that river, the Trojans realized with a gasp of dismay—nothing could brook its headstrong will for a single instant!

John Charley shouted across at them and

motioned to catch the tracking rope. It swung through the air, flashed along the granite like a snake, and was gone before any one could grab it. The Indian coiled it up again and cast a second time. A dozen hands groped for it in mid-air. A sharp snap, and it hung fast in Ajax's huge paw. He looked around for the stoutest sapling to which the rope would reach. Out of the cleft behind him grew a sturdy birch which the rope would just reach, leaving John Charley some two feet at his end to secure to the canoe. The Trojans tied their end in a secure fisherman's bend and then all pulled on it to test the strength of the roots.

At a signal from them His Lordship stepped to the brink, fearless, debonair. He grinned at them, laughed something over his shoulder to the other three who were sitting in the canoe to hold it down, and then plunged in. Instantly the rope sagged in a taut *V*. His whole body was at the mercy of the current which tore and dragged at him with fierce fin-

gers. They could see the white knuckles of his clenched hands as slowly he rolled and swayed his way across. His gleaming teeth showed, set and gritted, with every ounce of his will power and endurance in play. Ajax shook his head. Bob could hardly make that crossing—Patroclus never!

Eager hands grabbed Lord Jim the minute he arrived within reach. Panting, spent, grim, they hauled him out on the rock. His blue eyes gleamed at them unconquerably as he rose and staggered to his feet.

"Topping, y' know!—isn't it?—what!" he grinned at them. "But that's rather a sporty crossing for the boys to try."

The fertile Ulysses had an idea evidently, for he ran down to the edge of their rock: "Oh, Bob!—put—your—belt—under—your—armpits—and—around—the—rope!" he yelled.

Bob nodded, comprehending. Old Brains was always there in a pinch! With one arm over the rope and the additional security of

the belt, he hauled himself across hand over hand, a far less dangerous passage than His Lordship's. When at length unbuckled and freed he leaped for the Brains with glad gratitude in his eyes.

"That was a life-saver, 'Lyss!" he shouted, pounding him on the back again and again. "*Some* one in this crowd's got to be around to produce a real idea once in awhile! You've saved Pat, too, I'll bet!"

Patroclus came over in the same way without incident. He was light and slender and the waves touched him gently, if that ever could be said of a foaming monster like this river, but somehow its grip seemed less fierce. Except for a playful billet of timber which tried to ram him, he got over scot-free.

Then John Charley came down, waving his arms and gesticulating, making expressive pantomimes. Across the gap they could see his wild eyes gleaming in a fire of courage and daring, and his actions as regards the canoe were unmistakable.

"My word! He's coming across in the *canoe!*" gasped His Lordship. "He's going to attempt your scheme, Pat—with variations. Daring, rather! Get a half-turn of that rope around the sapling, boys, so we can take up his slack."

They untied the rope, and as many as could got hold of its free end, after a single hitch had been taken around the tree. John Charley, who had been lashing in the packs, waved his approval and then, with a wild and reckless shout, he raised the canoe by the gunwales, plunged it in with bows upstream, and shoved off in one mighty thrust. It shot across, the Trojans pulling in madly on the slack. For once the river was taken unawares. The canoe had nearly reached the opposite rock before the mad current seized it and whirled it downstream. Then the rope went taut, groaned, thinned, smoked. They held their breaths and prayed as the canoe was hurled broadside against the alder bank below the rock. John Charley grabbed branches and

hung fast. Inch by inch his brawny strength forced the canoe in. The others ran down along the rope and pulled in the bow—out of the grip of rushing waters that foamed and spouted around and over it. Once inside the eddy around the rock, the canoe shot toward them like a bullet and John Charley was catapulted heels over head forward as her bow struck.

They helped him ashore and pulled up the canoe.

"Bah gosh!—I was beat dat ol' rivière, me!" grinned John Charley, as they crowded around him. That was all he said, but His Lordship voiced the thoughts of all the rest about him.

"Topping, my dear chap! simply rippin'!" he beamed. "For sheer daring and courage, commend me to your American red man, boys!"

At last they were all reunited and had an opportunity to compare and explain, while Etienne and John Charley were rigging a rain shelter of the canoe and tarp. Under it a fire

was lighted and all their spare food cooked, for every one was famished.

"Who shot the White Bear?" asked Ulysses as the opening question, when their appetites had slacked a little. His Lordship pointed to Bob. "Nice shot, that. Four hundred yards at least."

"Let me tell you, Bob, that was the very worst thing you fellows could have done," declared the Brains. "That was Wamokwa, the Medicine Bear of the Naskapi, Bob, their sacred animal. We'll catch hot shot from them for it, mark me!" Then he told them all of the trade of Wamokwa as a cub for the Naskapi's help in securing Nagushwa which he and Etienne had deciphered at the cave.

Diomed shrugged his shoulders indifferently. "Your shot won the fight for us, though, Bob. Looked like a fine scrimmage coming off down there to me. I'm not worrying about their blamed bear."

"Me either, my word!" agreed His Lordship. "We saw the blighters coming in down

there with young Antoine and Ulysses and thought it best to lie low and watch a bit. It was only a little later when your party, or rather you alone, Di, rushed in on them. We were about to open fire on those blackguards who were going to duck the boy, when *you* burst like a bombshell on them. Rawther neat, that, Di! No shooting the natives, y' see. It's our way always. Then we had nothing to do but wait until we judged the right time to interfere had come. I aimed low at the chief with my express rifle, for I knew what its bullet could do in the way of driving stones—knocked down a Masai with it in Africa once the same way. That rifle has an awful punch altogether, my word!—The rest you know."

"I'd like to go get that bear, though," said Bob. "A polar bear's something of a trophy, you know."

"Heem no polar bear," put in Etienne. "Heem was *white* black bear, I tol' you. Wamokwa—Heap Medicine of the Naskapi."

"Ugh!" ejaculated Nishimi-wog emphat-

ically, shaking his head. "You no go back down dere!"

It was the sinister way in which he said it rather than the words themselves that made them all stop and look at him inquiringly. There was stern warning in those tones, a certain disapproval, too, as if John Charley, the Indian, felt outraged that these sacrilegious whites all deserved dire retribution.

"How?" asked Bob. "Why not?—Why can't I?"

"You keel de beeg Medicine of de Naskapi. Dey mooch mad. De whole tribe was come keel *you,* pooty soon."

John Charley's tones rang like a judgment.

It was a mighty serious thing to molest an animal reverenced by a whole tribe of Indians. They all felt, uneasily, that he was right in this, and that the quicker they got away the less trouble there would be.

"Boy—Leesten! Naniboujou, heem geeve you your life. Take eet and get out of dees co'ntry, alive," growled Nishimi-wog sullenly.

Bob himself began to feel almost like an outcast over those words of Nishimi-wog's. There was something so essentially Indian in feeling in his ominous tones that he could not escape a sort of self-conviction of somehow having been guilty of some enormous crime. He turned to the others to learn their judgment upon what was to be done next—whether to go back down below the lower falls and look for his lawful trophy, the White Bear, or to take Nishimi-wog's warning as showing the typical Indian attitude toward his act as a white man.

The others seemed disturbed, uneasy, anxious to go, to get away while there was yet time, before anything worse could befall them. They were well out of it so far; had got back Antoine and the fateful Nagushwa—only to incur this new menace. If the tones of almost shocked disapproval that lay back of Nishimi-wog's words were a reliable sign, they had come into a far worse danger as a result of Bob's shot.

"I fawncy, Bob, that the Naskapi have already taken the skin of your freak trophy," said His Lordship. "The blighters did not run far after the first scare of their sacred animal tumbling down among them. I'll warrant it will be kept as big medicine in some lodge bundle, from now on, from what I've read of your North American Indians."

Bob hated to give his trophy up, the only one of the trip so far for him, and a rare curiosity at that, but the sentiment of the crowd seemed against him. And what the Naskapi would do about it he could not fathom.

The guides said the decisive word for them: "You was right, sure 'bout dat, John," said Etienne, looking understandingly into Nishimi-wog's eyes. "De Injuns was be hugly. If M'sieu *wishes,* we go get dat skin," he offered, turning to Bob. "No? Den we go queek; find um portage trail up 'round dis falls, an' git away from here."

They rose and went into the forest. Bob was still undecided. He went back to that

shoulder of the hill where they had climbed up from the lower falls and sat down, trying to puzzle out the effect of the loss of Wamokwa on the Naskapi in connection with their pact with the Montaignais over Nagushwa. It surely was a problem. The rain had subsided to a mere drizzle, the thundersquall having gone on north, but its aftermath in the brown flood of the lower pool decided the question of the White Bear trophy for him forever, with a finality that was Nature's own. A white-capped torrent of muddy waters, tossing with driftwood, flooded over the whole beach where Diomed had encountered the Naskapi. To cross the river anywhere below, to the other side where the White Bear had fallen under the cliffs, was now beyond the ability of any puny party of mortals whatever. The Naskapi, too, were on that side. They could not cross either, so that their own crowd was safe from reprisal for the time, even if they sent runners for reënforcements.

Bob turned away at length. "Well, good-

by, old fellow—*my* trophy!" He exclaimed. "You will always exist, in memory, for me! But it looks like a worse time than ever with the Indians, for us. Wamokwa and Nagushwa!—We'd better strike down the Rocher River for St. Césare without delay!"

By the time he reached camp again Nishimiwog and Etienne had returned and the Trojans were busy untying the canoe from the two trees and making up their packs. Following the canoe they all started off through the wet brush, skirting along small ravines, dipping into hollows and crossing timbered flats, finally to arrive in a blazed path that was the portage trail.

His Lordship, noting that Bob was still distrait and silent, put his arm around his shoulder as they started up the trail to the river. "It's all right, dear old chap," he soothed. "Don't worry a little bit, ye know. We may have stirred up something of a hornet's nest, but that shot of yours was the right thing at the right time, my word! I

haven't a doubt that it saved Diomed a nawsty scrimmage—didn't it?"

Bob gave him a grateful look, but he said nothing. He was still concerned in trying to puzzle the thing out, to discover its causes and effects. He liked to put himself in the other fellow's place and then reason from that starting point; but, hang it, you couldn't do that with the Indians. Causes that to a white man would be insignificant might to them be portentous.

What would be the Naskapi reaction to the death of the White Bear? One could not be cocksure about that at all. As Bob tried to reason he found out that he did not know the Indian mind at all. It was an unknown country to him. His only clue was the tone in which John Charley Nishimi-wog had said: "You no go back down dere!"

How sinister had been that warning! John Charley himself seemed somehow immeasurably shocked. Bob, to the Indian mind, had committed a terrible sacrilege, he

seemed to think; would the Naskapi answer be a violent reprisal or merely a despairing release of the white men as too strong for them? The primitive Indians always reverenced animals, he knew; regarded them as in every way superior beings to themselves. The animals had keener eyesight, better ears, stronger muscles, superior quickness; were better equipped for the forest life than the red men, who had to rely on bow and spear to help out their dull senses and puny strength. How different was this point of view from the white man's, accustomed to regard himself as unquestionably the lord of creation! And the Indians invariably worshiped a freak animal, as obviously endowed by the Great Spirit with supernatural qualities. That was how the Naskapi regarded their white black bear. Bob could not help but feel that there would be dire retribution for his hasty shot. And then, what would the Montaignais do next about Nagushwa? Would both of them try for it now, the Naskapi for revenge, the

Montaignais because of its connection with their lands? Was there anything in it which would constitute a flaw in Frontenac's title in the white government's eyes? If so, would this whole territory be given over to lumbermen and pulp men—those pests of the wilderness?

These were unpleasant questions, and they had reached the end of the trail before Bob had finished puzzling over the probable outcome of it all. The canoe landing was in a little backwater which gave on the main river, which could be seen rushing by, swollen and sullen, past a point some fifty yards away. It was their passing this backwater inadvertently that had made them miss the portage on the trip down.

"Dah!—now who was be go?" asked Etienne, looking around with his brown hands gripping the canoe gunwale.

Bob stood up immediately, bent on denying himself any immunity from the Naskapi by the canoe: "Your boy, for one, Etienne,"

he suggested, pointing out Antoine; "Pat, for another; Ulysses and Nishimi-wog—how's that, Lord Jim? We husks can fight our way through the brush faster than they can."

"Right–o! In with you, boys, and let's be off!" said Lord Jim, cheerfully. Bob admired the rugged unconcern of his tones. Like all his breed the young Englishman was not given to any vain imaginings. He was totally indifferent to what the Naskapi might or might not do about their sacred White Bear or the Montaignais about Nagushwa. When they really *did* something His Lordship would meet it and go them one better. That seemed to be his attitude. It bucked Bob up a lot more than a sympathetic, "You'd better go in the canoe, too, Bob, being the one of us marked for special vengeance," which the boy had been rather expecting. Of course he would have refused, but His Lordship's rugged ignoring that there *was* any real danger was far better. It was the point of view of Ajax and Diomed too, Bob noted. The two

six-footers seemed entirely unworried and were prospecting for some sort of trail that would parallel the canoe on the river.

"How far is it to the next portage, Nishimiwog?" asked His Lordship, as they got into the canoe and the Indian seized her stern to shove off.

"Oh, mebbe t'ree, four mile. You mak for high ground an' keep dere. When you see mist in trees, dat is rapeed. Den coom down to de rivière again."

He shoved off and the paddles dipped in. The last Bob saw of them was the canoe flipping around the point of trees and out on to the rushing, angry, torrent of the swollen backwater, streaked with driftwood, boiling with sullen eddies.

No one who has not actually fought his way through the primeval forest can have any conception of the lumpy and uneven and branch-breaking progress of it. The bowlders are there, the dead and moldering trunks of monarchs that have fallen long ago, the hollows

left by uptorn roots, themselves long since rotted to dust. Further they are all covered with duff and thick moss, soft and treacherous, and crisscrossed with young growth, shade-killed, and fallen saplings, with the bare mighty bones of trees recently fallen. Through this wilderness Etienne led the way, ax in hand. The two husks drove on behind him, then His Lordship, and finally Bob, bringing up the rear. It was wild and fierce going down into illimitable ravines, across tangled bottoms and up giant slopes. They were all gasping for breath before the highlands were reached. Here were bare rocks again, with scrags up to their necks crowded in between the interstices. Etienne seemed to be looking for something, and finally he announced it with a grunt of relief.

"Caribou lead—now we was go better!" he grinned, stopping at what looked like a muddy cowpath between the rocks and bushes. Along it they pushed in single file. It was infinitely preferable to straight scrags, and it

led in a general southwesterly direction, whereas all the moose and deer trails they had crossed had led down towards the river. After perhaps two miles of it Etienne paused and pointed down into the valley where the dark green forest followed the river's course under frowning ridges opposite.

"Dere was dem rapeeds," he announced. "We go find-um moose trail."

Bob, who was last, gave a final look around over the open country before following the others down the slopes. He had looked back a good deal during the trip, keeping to himself a haunting thought that they were being followed by Naskapi scouts even now. Nothing that his eye could verify had occurred so far to confirm any such suspicions. Still the idea had persisted; why, he could not fathom.

A tiny spruce growing in the cleft of a distant bowlder caught his eye as he scanned the rocky horizon. It was a long way off, but even then the thing seemed somehow un-

natural. Spruces did not get much of a foothold up here; if any tree survived it was more apt to be the twisted and gnarly Bank's pine. Feigning to follow the others he ducked inside the scrags, to turn and watch it where he could himself peer concealed through fronds of green needles. For a moment he could scarce believe his eyes—for, while his back had been turned, the little spruce had vanished! He looked again, bending the pine twigs aside to see better. Yes, those two granite bowlders, one folding across in front of the other, that was the place. He was sure of it—unmistakable—the spruce grew, or had been held for a blind, right in the cleft. But it was gone now!

"Gee!" he muttered. "Already!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE WARNING

"HOLD up a minute, fellows!" called Bob, hastening to rejoin his party. "We're being followed. I saw a Naskapi scout back there."

"I know dat. Me see Injun, two, t'ree tam already," said Etienne stolidly.

"Why didn't you report it?" asked Bob.

Etienne shrugged his shoulders. "Of course, dey follow of it. You was see!" he exclaimed, ominously.

"We ought to push right through and make the home camp to-night, eh, Lord Jim?" suggested Bob. "If they beat us there we'll find all the tents and grub and trophies gone, I should think."

"No. No wan touch a camp or a cache in

dis co'ntree," said Etienne. "Man lie, steal, keel—but no touch cache!"

Bob had read somewhere of that great and inviolable law of the North, scrupulously observed by the Indians, and as scrupulously adopted by the whites. Its present practical illustration was to him another glimpse into the Indian mind. The custom had its roots, of course, in the fact that a cache was a man's very life, but there was a deeper and more obscure psychology in it, the same feeling that made a white man abhor hitting a man below the belt or gassing him on the battlefield, although he would cheerfully hand him a knock-out to the jaw or kill him with a rifle. That same feeling it was that would let the Naskapi take a deadly revenge for the death of Wamokwa yet scrupulously leave the white man's camp intact. No; there would be no hurry to beat anybody back to the base on Loon Lake.

During Bob's ruminations they had come down through the scrags, and presently the

whole party found themselves descending in single file down a faint game track to the river. A chatter of troubled waters came to their ears; then a rumble—a bellow. Then the whole party halted. Ahead were the husks and Etienne standing arms akimbo and looking out at a swift, deep torrent that eddied and roared over rocks nearly submerged. They had crossed no portage trail along the banks.

"This is the rapids we ran coming down, fellows," said Bob. "I don't think there *is* a portage around them."

"We was have to track dat can-noe—everybody," announced Etienne. "We go find Lord Jeem's can-noe now."

He began picking his way through an atrocious tangle of bowlders and scrubs toward the foot of the rapids. A yell came from the bank below; then they saw His Lordship's party seated around the canoe waiting for them.

"*Some* trip!" grinned Ulysses, as they came

up. "It was like fighting a tide rip all the way up, Bob! John Charley finally had to cut a pole and shove us against the current, with the rest of us paddling in relays as we tired out."

"Here was de track line, Etienne," said Nishimi-wog, getting up and handing him the coil of greasy bast rope that had already done such signal service in rescuing them from the ledge above the falls. He got into the canoe and shoved off with his pole.

Instantly fierce and exciting action began. The canoe veered out like a wild thing. Nishimi-wog performed unheard-of prodigies of strength and activity. One by one, they all became engaged in the toil of hauling on the track line. Sometimes it went slack, when Nishimi-wog got into a backwater eddy where he could pole against the current, while the Trojans floundered and swarmed over rocks, climbed enormous trunks of water-thrown trees, or splashed valiantly through the icy water. There was no hope of keeping

dry now. By twos and threes they hauled and passed the track line to other groups collected at some vantage point further up, who in turn hauled the canoe up and up the rapids by sheer strength until relieved by the next relay. It was a delirious mile of scrambling absurd timber tangles along shore, of climbing out on mossy and slippery rocks, of splashes and tumbles and feats of hilarious daring.

Altogether the Trojans could not remember having had so good a time in their lives before as in the tussles and excitements of tracking that canoe up those swollen rapids. Ajax and Diomed were in their element. They joked and jeered, fell in, upset Nishimi-wog more than once with some elephantine haul on the line, and once they caught Ulysses alone out on a log, which they proceeded gently to rock from its shore end. Black suspicion, misgiving, terror were in that look which Ulysses shot shoreward. He stormed and threatened; then begged, pleaded, implored.

They went right on rolling, grinning at him fiendishly, until the Brains, with one last desperate leap, sprang airily from that log and floundered up to his thighs in wet rapids. It was high time that Ulysses was horsed for getting himself trapped, brains and all, by the Naskapi! Also the Crafty One's contribution to the tracking thus far had been mainly yelling and passing the track line from dry and safe perches along the banks.

At last came the second backwater and the canoe and shore parties interchanged.

"We'll meet you at that bluff at the foot of the big chute where we camped coming down, boys," said His Lordship, leading his party up into the woods. Bob's party repacked the wet canoe and started upstream. What a relief, after the long hours of toil, trail breaking and tracking! In spite of the increased volume of water there was a little current in this backwater and the canoe slipped along under sturdy paddles. An hour later the high bluff came in sight at the head of a placid reach,

and they landed and at once set to work kindling a huge conflagration. Wet clothes came off and dry ones were fished out of the packs and put on. The canoe and tarp shelter went up, lazily, leisurely. Etienne set about baking a mountain of biscuits and boiling ponderous mulligan.

It was sunset when stick breaking and voices sounded in the timber above them, and presently Nishimi-wog and His Lordship's party came into camp. They changed into dry clothes weary and silent.

The weird flashes of the northern lights were shimmering in the sky by the time supper was over and the tired party was lolling in comfortable weariness on the needle banks. An open gap of the river reach stretched out before them to the north. The long twilight had almost gone. As Bob watched, a lone woolly cloud sailed slowly across the gap, detaching itself little by little from the cliffs and spruce spires on the left wall of the ravine and finally framing itself in the cleft, but the cloud was so

far distant as to seem almost some mirage of the North. As Bob watched the rays of the northern lights playing over it, the cloud slowly changed its shape. A sort of nose grew out from its eastern end. It elongated until a long furry head and neck jutted out from the pear-shaped mass behind it, while over it flickered and played the unearthly green and violet rays of the Borealis. Then a dent began to form on the under side of the body. It grew, until distinct but formless legs gave the cloud a weird and tattered but unmistakable shape.

"Ugh!—Wamokwa, de White Bear of de Naskapi!" grunted Nishimi-wog, who lay beside Bob watching it. "Him talk!"

Bob shivered uneasily. Nature played queer pranks up here!

"I see it, too, John Charley," he said. "Weird thing, isn't it? What do *you* make of it?" he asked curiously, to get the Indian's point of view.

"De Bear Ghos', heem was hungry, dat sign say. De spirits talk to us by de light of Nada

(the Borealis). De Naskapi, dey see heem, sure, mebbe. Dey keel! He hongry—so dey feed heem de ghosts of white mans!"

The Indian mind! Bob realized how little he understood it. The cocksure judgment of sportsmen and travelers had pronounced the Indian "childish," but this one episode of the White Bear was showing Bob far otherwise. The Indian mind was at once mysterious and resplendent, subtle with the subtlety of the Orient, bold with the courage of the hardiest Spartan. Whatever form the retribution of the Naskapi would take, it would be rather of an oriental splendor and of a finality that only Asia would delight in. There would be nothing small or pretty about it!

They all realized that when their canoe brought them back in two relays across Loon Lake next morning and they found everything untouched. Not the smallest article had been stolen. The tents and tackle were unharmed, the very meat of moose, deer and caribou

still lay wrapped, heavily salted, in the skins brought to camp. But both Montaignais and Naskapi had been there, as Nishimi-wog pointed out by their moccasin prints. If so, it must have been since the thunderstorm, for these occasional tracks were made in fresh duff, clean washed and laid by the rain.

Bob found the reactions of the party to that discovery very interesting to study. His Lordship merely said, "Hm!" and went his way, attending to getting the trophy of Old Plow-Handles ready for the taxidermist. Etienne, with the boy Antoine now following him about like a shadow, shrugged his heavy shoulders and set stolidly to work cutting all their meat into long strips for jerking. The two husks, Ajax and Diomed, dove with rapturous grunts for their sleeping bags and adjourned *sine die* until slept up. Patroclus and Bob helped Nishimi-wog build the jerky frame, cutting for it green balsam boughs which would not burn. Ulysses, occupied exclusively with externals, endeavored to track

up the fresh moccasin trails and so build up a theory, the pieces of which he would try to fit together like a Chinese puzzle.

A day of rest and inaction passed in camp. At night the red reflection of a great fire to the north glowed over the horizon under the beams of the aurora. It might be a combined council fire of the Naskapi and Montaignais; it might be some wooded section burning, for, with the exception of that brief thnuderstorm, no rain at all had fallen during their entire stay. But it was there, ominous and enigmatical, for two nights. Then there was nothing in the north but the empty sky, a velvet darkness, set with the constellations that revolve around the pole, and shot with the ghostly fingers of the northern lights.

Nearly half a ton of meat hung in smoking and shriveling strips from the long pole frames of the jerky fire. When dry and hard as so many sticks of wood they would be done, and would then weigh perhaps three hundred pounds. Etienne and Antoine, and Nishimi-

wog too, when not out trout fishing with His Lordship or one of the boys, tended the birch fire under the jerky frame assiduously, for this plunder was part of the guides' reward for the trip and would furnish them with their winter meat.

On the third day the restless Trojans began to hunt again, for time was flying and their trip would soon be up. Ulysses brought in a small black bear, ranging far and wide for him without ever seeing a sign of an Indian. It decided Patroclus that it was high time for him, too, to get a game head and he announced his purpose that night.

"Fellows, if you-all can spare me Nishimiwog, I'm going after a woodland caribou tomorrow. It's getting late, now, for moose calling, but John Charley says the caribou ought to be moving by this time. Me for the still-hunting game."

"Go to it, Pat!" encouraged Bob. "Caribou hunting none of us has tried yet. Good luck to you!"

"How about you, Bob?" came back Patroclus. "Aren't you going to take anything back to show 'em at Colquitt's?"

"No—the White Bear was trophy enough for me—more than enough!" replied Bob, moodily. The thing still weighed heavily on his spirits, Patroclus saw, so he did not press him further.

Before dawn he and Nishimi-wog set out in their canoe across the lake, bound for a distant backwater of which Nishimi-wog knew over on the west shore.

"De caribou, heem was travel. Travel all tam," said Nishimi-wog, by way of initiating Patroclus into the mysteries of this kind of hunting. "You climb beeg dead tree. Look out. Mooch co'ntree. You see-um stag, which way he come, den get down an' roon lak everything."

"I should think he'd see you first and go somewhere else, wouldn't he?" asked Patroclus.

"He no 'fred, till he strike de man-smell;

den he go lak de wind!" chuckled the Indian.

The canoe was entering the stream which flowed out of the backwater by the time they had discussed all the tricks and stratagems of the woodland caribou. The Indian chose a down tree where the canoe could be hauled up on the muskeg and they could get a start across the marsh to the high barren grounds that surrounded it. Once up there Patroclus swarmed up a tall dead tree, with his binoculars slung about his neck. A great forest fire had swept through here in some forgotten time, and the whole country was filled with dead trees, most of them prone and wind-thrown, some still standing, while up through the windfalls grew bushy young white spruce reveling in the sunlight and open space. The bare bones of the continent dotted the landscape—great granite rocks rounded by glacial action which jutted out of the green of the scrags. So large and white were they that Patroclus was continually training his glasses on them, his heart beating fast with the anticipation of

their proving to be caribou standing still.

But he soon came to realize that caribou *never* stand still. They plod along, wandering about the barrens, nipping up a mouthful of fodder and chewing it as they go. Far off, three such moving white spots finally rewarded his search, and he crammed the glasses to his eyes, training them on the band avidly. The leader was a fine buck, with long curved antlers and the curious brow-plates jutting out over the forehead.

"Caribou, John!" he called down, sliding hastily down out of the tree.

"W'ich way was de lead?" asked Nishimiwog excitedly.

Patroclus realized by that that the caribou always travel on "leads" or cowpaths made by themselves and that it was important to watch them awhile to get the general direction of the lead.

"Across us, I think, beyond that spruce thicket."

John Charley set off at a run toward it. It

was essential to reach it first and fire from there as the band passed. Into it they dashed after a short run. Scrags, thick and exasperating, but Pat drove his way fiercely through after the squirming back of the Indian. Then an oustretched hand stopped him. He came up and peered over John Charley's shoulder. The caribou were crossing right in front of them, not a hundred yards off over the tumbled bowlder and muskeg. Patroclus whipped up his rifle, aimed a foot ahead of the buck and fired. The animal flinched.

"You was hit heem! Good boy!" grunted John Charley, his wild eyes gleaming with the lust of the chase." Now roon!"

The two cows had scattered wildly at the shot but the buck still wandered on haltingly, uncertainly. He had not slackened his pace perceptibly and was getting out of range. It seemed odd to Patroclus that they could run after him in plain sight, but such is the caribou nature. "Shoot, moos be!" barked Nishimiwog.

Pat went down on one knee and fired again. The buck was now galloping wildly, some vagrant wind having borne their scent to him. It was that which had made the Indian bid him shoot quick. The bullet smacked sharply, wheeling the caribou around, and he dashed out of sight into another dense thicket of Bank's pine.

"Now we was wait," announced Nishimiwog, squatting down and lighting a vile and ancient corncob pipe. Pat was all for rushing in and finishing it, then and there, but the caribou would run miles, wounded as he was, John Charley explained with force. After fifteen minutes he rose again.

"He was coom dead in dere," said the Indian confidently.

Patroclus, unconvinced, searched the thicket, but found nothing in it. Out on the north side of it was a bog of muskeg, across which tracks showed that the stag had plowed. There were numerous other prints there too, so that his were soon lost. But the Indian,

quartering the ground like a dog, found here and there a trace of blood that led them on. The caribou had made for a clump of spruce across the muskeg. Beyond that was rocky barren and down trees, and a smear of blood on the trunk of one of them told where he had crossed.

They were floundering and climbing through this, in scrags up to their necks, when suddenly the stag got up again, ahead of them, and again Patroclus' rifle cracked. This time he went down to stay!

"Whee! He's mine!" whooped Patroclus, running forward. "Still-hunting for mine! I'd rather have that caribou than all the moose in Quebec!"

John Charley grinned appreciatively and they both started in at once skinning him out. All day they worked, stopping only at noon to boil the kettle. It was late afternoon when both staggered across the barrens loaded down wth trophies and all the meat that could be carried.

"Caribou meat, heem mak fine jerky!" declared John Charley, happily. "I was coom back here to-morrow an' breeng de rest of heem."

They loaded the canoe and set out for camp. It was dark when she ran ashore at the old landing and the Trojans were already at supper.

That night Bob and Ulysses went on the first watch together, for they had not dared, even yet, to relax their nightly vigil. Nothing happened to awaken any suspicion. The woods brooded in their usual stillness, while overhead the northern lights flickered in a play that made them almost listen for some inaudible sound coming from them.

And then, about midnight, there came an owl. He was a barred owl, as his lusty *Hoo–hoo—wha–hoo–hoo!—hoo–hoo–wha!* proclaimed. At first the youths did not pay much attention to him. Then Ulysses drifted over to where Bob sat listening.

"Say, Bob," he whispered, "that fellow isn't timing right! I've timed them often, down South, and they always hoot nearly on the minute. And he seems to be flying all over the lot, judging from the different places from which the hoots come."

"Try an answer," suggested Bob, "that always shuts him up, for no man can imitate him so as to deceive the beggar."

Ulysses crept off into the forest. Presently, in answer to the owl, a ghostly hoot floated out into the night. Even Bob had to smile at the palpable imitation!

"Pretty good, for old Brains—but, if I was an owl!" laughed Bob to himself. Then he listened eagerly, for in answer there came a single derisive chuckle from somewhere out in the woods!

Presently Ulysses came floating back, in the tenuous silence that ensued. "Did you hear *that!*" he whispered, breathlessly.

"Sure! Naskapi or Montaignais, all right! They're out there," came back Bob. "We'll

have doings to-night. I'll wake up Nishimiwog."

He was about to do so when they both halted dead still in their tracks. From somewhere in the woods there rang out the unmistakable twang of a bow. It was followed, presently, by the faint hiss of the arrow as it dropped vertically before their eyes and stuck quivering in the duff near the red embers of the fire.

They both looked at it in silence. Then Bob stepped forward and pulled it out, for a roll of birch bark was tightly wrapped around its shaft.

"A message, 'Lyss! Shall we fire a shot in answer?"

"No, what's the use! Open it," urged Ulysses, eagerly.

Bob cut it off with his hunting knife. On the birchbark was written a line of those queer sign-writing characters used all over the North which were taught the Crees nearly a century ago by the missionaries. By them an Indian

can learn to read and write his own language in one day's study—a sardonic comment on our own alphabet, which takes years to learn and use. The western and eastern Cree and the Naskapi all use it. The characters looked like this:

The youths could make nothing of it, so Bob waked up Nishimi-wog to translate it.

"Ugh! Heem was in English!" exclaimed the Indian, after he had rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and read it over. "Dat writin' was say: 'White man, get out! Wamokwa hungry!' Ugh! De Naskapi was go keel all of it, I t'ink me!" he remarked, ominously.

CHAPTER IX

LADDER PORTAGE

"I SAY, ye know!" grinned His Lordship, as Bob and Patroclus sought him out to learn his decision on the arrow that had fallen into camp. "Fawncy the beggars having the nerve to tell us to move on! I was going to, directly, but—my word!" For a time he hesitated. The flip of a coin would have decided him. The sporting chance of a fight if they remained inclined him to the latter course, but it was the trout of the Rocher that decided him.

"Etienne tells me they fight much harder in that swift water than in this beastly lake," he mused.

Bob thought of that other Englishman who had given up Alaska because the salmon there did not rise to a fly, and grinned.

"Lak dat!—I show you!" put in Etienne, holding his hands wide apart. He was aching to get down to St. Césare himself and to be rid of Nagushwa in the safe vaults of the church. Bob knew, but nothing of this had he ever hinted.

"Really? My word, we must try the dry fly with them! Rather!" ejaculated Lord Jim, enthusiastically. "We strike the tents first thing to-morrow, boys!" he announced.

Bob drew a big breath of relief. Unless something happened that night, they would be safely on their way. Early next morning the tents came down, the packs were made up and stowed in the canoes, the antlers and skins lashed in lengthwise where they would not catch on passing branches, and the dried meat was put into the old potato sack, now almost empty. The fleet of canoes set out along the east shore and presently ran into swift water, where the Rocher flowed out on its crooked way down to the St. Lawrence. Etienne sang with happiness. At last they

were going on to St. Césare where the infernal Nagushwa could be got rid of!

The Rocher was still slightly swollen as a result of the cloud-burst, and the first white water showed itself a safe rapids to shoot. Down it the fleet wallowed, Ajax and Diomed, to whom running rapids was new, shouting and yelling with excitement. Below that was a long backwater, with the bends looping and turning through a silent wilderness of black spruce spires and the placid waters a mirror of the green banks. Then came the heavy thunder of troubled waters ahead and Etienne ran the canoe ashore at a blazed tree, motioning to them to follow vigorously.

"*Chute de quarante pieds!*—Rapeed—forty-foot drop!" he yelled at them warningly, for His Lordship was heading his canoe right for it, seeking new waters to conquer.

Bob thought of unlimbering his rifle from its case as Etienne started up the silent trail with the birchbark over his head, Antoine shouldering the tail of it resting on a sweater

and a pair of socks. He was still unconvinced that they were safe. Here, in the unprotected solitudes of the portage trail, where the whole party would be strung out and laboring, would be just the place the Indians would choose to make that pounce which would recover them the sinister Medicine Gold—Nagushwa. But he abandoned the idea as soon as thought of. Childish! No; that way might suit the Montaignais but it was not the way of the Naskapi—not to avenge their Medicine Bear! It would be something infinitely more terrible, something from which there would be no escape, something spectacular and commensurate with the gorgeous Indian ideas of a fitting retribution. Bob contented himself with shouldering his pack and heaving up atop of it a heavy side-opening duffel bag loaded with food.

"Dees was de Lynk Portage," called back Etienne from under the hollow bulk of his canoe as he followed along. "I show you trout, pooty soon—lak dat!" He spread

his hands three feet apart. The ruling passion—fish and game—was still uppermost in the simple *habitant's* mind, Bob noted. Nagushwa did not worry him much, not in all this crowd of gentlemen voyageurs.

Through the tree trunks he could see the river hurtling and flashing by below them in the sunlight. One glimpse through an open vista cured Bob of the vaguest impulse to run those rapids! The river bellowed over a series of ledges, in one place leaping ten feet sheer and falling with a hollow thunder into a foaming pool. Feet thudded behind him in the soft duff, and voices and laughter came through the forest—to rise to howls of derision as Bob looked back and saw Ulysses with his tump strap slipped down on to his Adam's apple and nearly choking him, while Ajax, with his canoe tilted up like a hat, was laughing at him in ungodly glee. The lighthearted Trojans were getting all the fun possible out of this portage and making nothing of its labors. Bob thought of that first

weary carry of theirs over from the Ouiatchouan and grinned.

At the foot of the trail they came upon the lower pool, a perfect trout paradise of swirling waters. His Lordship had already got out his rod and the rest went for theirs with trembling fingers. Etienne and Nishimi-wog sat and grinned beatific grins at them all. Here would be trout that *were* trout!

"Dat long!" said Etienne, encouragingly, making significant pantomimes. It was wonderful water, and there was lots of room for amateurish backcasts. Soon five rods were going, while the guides ducked for cover and Bob put up a free hand to protect his ear from Ajax's flies.

Yes, it was wonderful water, they all agreed—but not a trout rose! Even Etienne and Nishimi-wog looked at each other astounded at that. Etienne borrowed a rod and tried his prettiest casting himself. No go! His Lordship and Ulysses soon sat down on a roll of blankets to consider this

palpable nature-faking on the part of the trout.

"My word!—To have come three thousand miles for this!" ejaculated Lord Jim disgustedly. "What's the matter, Etienne?"

The guide shrugged his shoulders puzzled and looked at Nishimi-wog. The Indian grinned. He didn't want to say it, but that no self-respecting trout would rise to any such a stream-whacking onslaught seemed to be his thought.

"I've got it!" yelled Ulysses slapping his leg. "The trout aren't rising because we're fishing where there aren't any!"

"Marvelous, altogether!" retorted His Lordship sarcastically. "Your idea, then, is to take a census of the entire Rocher River and then fish where the density of population is greatest, eh? Where do you propose to begin?"

"In the rapids, of course!" came back Ulysses. "It's high water, see? The trout have moved up, so as to get all the bugs that

come down before they get a chance to drown in the falls. Inductive logic, hey?" There was triumph in his tones, conviction, the sure mental processes of reasoning from cause to effect. "C'mon, fellows!" he yelled back eagerly, starting off up the trail himself.

The two husks laughed, openly derisive, and His Lordship began putting away his rod. As an English sportsman his code forbade him to fish unless there was a rise that you could *see!* But Bob followed Ulysses; there *might* be something in that theory.

They found the nearest approach to the rapids to be above that ten-foot drop, where a blizzard had once sat down on the forest and left behind it a nest of wind-thrown trees. A jumble of huge dead trunks filled the forest, and, with a rod and three dangling flies, all looking for trouble, it was diverting to navigate through them. But Ulysses ran out along a bare straight trunk—and then stood still and pranced, beckoning excitedly to Bob to come out. Below him showed a silent pool,

with a little private waterfall of its own, and down into it he lowered his flies.

"Look at them, man—only look at the monsters!" he whispered ecstatically. "Oh, boy! I shall settle down here for a green old age!"

His flies bobbed over the water and there was a turmoil down below as three at once rose and leaped out of water, with two hooking themselves. Down went the protesting rod, bowed and sprung again and again, and then a third trout took the remaining hook.

"Say, man—this is simply a shame! Let me at 'em!" gurgled Bob. He had to lower himself like a chimpanzee to get at those fellows with the landing net. A sudden scoop, and it came up with two savage spotted fontanalis flopping madly in it and the third dangling outside. They held their breaths as the precious burden was raised and Ulysses made a snatch at the one in mid-air, which saved him.

"A triple!" he whooped, beginning to creel them. Bob grabbed up his own rod and ran

out farther on the trunk. With a daring leap he had landed on a flat ledge of granite, a rock glaring in the sun with the whole river foaming past, its surface flicked with tossing wavelets, its depths fumed like boiling milk. Out of it little yellowbellies leaped for Bob's flies in mid-air. His rod bent in a fine whipping arc and more weight added itself as a second trout got the tail fly. He yelled for the landing net. These furious little demons of the rapids were strong and husky, and they had a terrific current to aid them! Ulysses came leaping out with landing net and rod in hand; came to help land Bob's trout—stayed to forget his own pool entirely and surrender to the fascination of such trout fishing as only once in a lifetime the red gods give!

An hour later Patroclus joined them. He came to chasten and expostulate over their keeping the whole party waiting. They handed him a rod without a word—and Patroclus remained, a maniac, shouting with the

joys of battle, whooping triumphantly in yells that were lost in the din of waters—lost, utterly lost to all sense of time and duty!

And then came His Lordship, angry of countenance, filled with reproaches quite as just and as logical as those of Patroclus. They pressed a rod into His Lordship's hands—and the trout did the rest! A sudden invisible tug—a savage strike—a chattering reel—a rod that whipped and bowed like a mad thing, and His Lordship became forthwith a capering and gibbering lunatic. Trout struck and tore out the hook in that rushing torrent; trout leaped and caught the dropper fly; other trout made off with the tail hackle on the same cast; trout snagged leaders over rock ledges and hung up flies in unknown crevices in the rocks—and still they fished!

Two hours later His Lordship had to be forcibly led away from there, for it was sunset and John Charley Nishimi-wog stood beckoning to them imperatively from the windfall. It was really time to go! To this

day the Trojans speak of that trout fishing of Lynx Rapids in awed whispers!

When they reached the lower pool two canoes had already gone on down. Bob and Ulysses and Patroclus didn't care. It had been a perfect day—and in their mind's eye two shirt tails were due to come out and be cut off once they could lay hands on those abandoned skeptics—Ajax and Diomed.

Three miles of rapids lay before them. The banks shot by; water boiled around the gunwales and slapped over the bows; rocks were grazed, and for one hilarious instant His Lordship hung up on a bowlder and threatened to wreck the whole expedition—but not a whoop cared they! Those trout! Bob looked back at Patroclus with happy, shining eyes. *That* was a day!

Then came a long backwater, with paddles dipping silently under a sky deep purple in the gloaming. At the head of the reach a ruddy fire glowed, and the ghostly shapes of the tents showed redly in the light of multi-

tudinous sparks streaming up. They landed. We draw a curtain over that scene when those trout were thrown out on the bank and the Trojans started for Ajax and Diomed, shouting battle cries!

The next day was one long campaign of mixed cruising. They shot some nasty water; they ran into wide rippling shallows and had to get out and wade, dragging the canoes by their tracking lines; they portaged around precipices and cut through the forest with axes to drag the canoes around some new and impassable obstruction that the river had recently tumbled into its lap. Lord Jim lost his pipe; that is, he thought he had lost it, but he might have swallowed it, he admitted, in the tense excitement of deciding whether to go around a certain bowlder or through it.

They got into a gorge, with high cliffs towering above them a hundred and fifty feet on both sides. Here the water boiled and swirled sullenly as the canoes shot through it mile after mile. The rods were gotten out,

for the trout were there, announcing their presence by smashes of foam that brought yells of delight from the leading canoes. Fishing in this giant's bathtub was an exasperating experience. There was no time to do it properly; no time for a decent cast, even. If a trout missed the fly he had to be abandoned, for the next whip would land fifty feet further downstream. And those that *were* hooked, snarled up the fleet of canoes inextricably. The current bore them all along, willy-nilly, but the trout went where they pleased, under canoes, around the other man's line, in behind rocks, where there was no alternative but to drag them out by *force majeur* or to tear out the hook. There was much hilarity and two broken rods before the end of that gorge was reached.

Etienne ran the leading canoe ashore with an unusual taciturnity—for him. He was saving the most spectacular feature of this trip and saying nothing at all about it. He wanted them to burst upon it suddenly; to

have it take them off their feet with its appalling immensity, its almost fabulous test of a man's courage.

And it did! All they saw at first was a terrific, heart-breaking portage up the walls of that gorge, along a path that zigzagged up and up, through rock ledges, with fearful falls for the man who was clumsy with his canoe, and bush tangles that were a snare and a delusion for the man burdened with a pack twice as big as himself. At its top they stood on a rocky table-land, sweating, mopping brows, and cursing cheerfully. Beyond to the south stretched blue distance, a magnificent panorama of the Laurentian country below.

Then a simultaneous howl of protest went up, as Etienne led the way over to the ledge of that rock.

"*Voilà,* de Ladder Portage, M'sieus!" he grinned, waving his hands invitingly down at the supreme feature of his show.

They looked down; and every one felt himself grabbing desperately at the last remnants

of his courage which seemed oozing out rapidly through his boots! For, below them, leading down, was a great bare tree trunk, notched with steps. Down over empty nothingness it went, in a steep slant, down, down, nearly a hundred feet into a green forest below, out of which the tallest spruce spires rose up so that they could look down on their tops!

"My word—do we go down that thing!" gasped His Lordship. "Right, boys! It isn't allowed the Ruling Clauss to—funk, ye know," his voice fairly quavered.

They looked at him unhappily. Still it *had* to be done. Etienne grunted energetically and picked up the long birchbark. He swung it over his head with a powerful heave and young Antoine grasped the tail of it and set it on his slender shoulder. Over the top of the trunk Etienne put down a steady foot into the first notch. The canoe dipped in sudden jerks as he descended, until it rose up at a great slant paralleling the trunk. Then

Antoine stepped down into the first notch. Bob watched his boyish face curiously. There was nothing written there but care for his own and his father's footsteps. The deadly void below did not exist for him.

"*Doucement* (carefully) *là bas!*" growled up Etienne's voice from under the canoe. They all held their breath as it slowly went down. So that was the way it was done, eh? Bob reasoned that it was safe enough, *if* one went steady and sure and there were no wind, but what his own legs would do when his turn came he could not conjecture.

Nishimi-wog and His Lordship followed next. They stopped several times on the trunk, and joking remarks came from Lord Jim as he kicked at several rotten log steps to make sure they were safe. But they passed down safely. The rugged indifference of the English! thought Bob, as he reflected on his own high-strung race and wondered how the fiery soul of Patroclus would take this ordeal. He would overdo it,

probably, and precipitate them both through too much courage.

Ajax and Diomed came next. They went at it the way they did everything—bullheaded. Scornful growls, biting sarcasms, a disdainful and hilarious descent they made, ending in a disgraceful riot as Ajax attempted to trot down the last notches and so pulled the cursing Diomed, the canoe and all, down on him in one glorious crash.

Bob looked out once more over the panorama of life before picking up their canoe. Below him lay the Montagnais country, green, endless, glinting here and there with the silver thread of the Rocher. Beyond a distant line of ridges lay civilization, St. Césare, white people, a release from a worry that was to him far greater and more overshadowing than even the hazard of this Ladder Portage. Then he hitched his belt and turned to the canoe, biting his lip.

"Well—up with her, Pat!" He gritted his teeth and looked at Patroclus, to note with

misgivings, that well-known flare in his eyes that told him his slender chum was all lit up, and more than on his toes for this adventure. Between them they propped the canoe up in a slant and Bob got under and rested its forward gunwales on his shoulders. The tough wood bit cruelly, but he was rather glad of it and did not put on a protecting wad of socks. He felt the tail of the canoe go up as Patroclus raised it on his shoulder, and then he put his foot over gingerly into the first notch of the Ladder trunk. The view below sickened him. Down stretched the vast bare bulk of the tree trunk. His eyes fastened themselves steadily on the next notch, but below it and around it the empty void seemed swimming, wavering, out of focus, as were the green trees far under him.

The reassuring steadiness of Patroclus at the other end stiffened him somewhat and he stepped down into the next notch. Another one; and then still another. The friendly side of the cliff seemed walking backward

from him, now. He was alone, all alone, out in a hideous emptiness, with nothing but his own nerve to save him from death.

"Higher, Pat!" he gasped, hoarsely, for the canoe seemed touching the cliff ledge above. The canoe rose obediently. It continued to rise, for Patroclus himself was now approaching the brink. Bob felt its weight trying to shove him irresistibly, brutally, head foremost downward, and he braced back against it in wild fright.

"Hold up your end, Pat, for heaven's sake!" he cried hoarsely; then stepped down a notch and at once the pressure was relieved.

"Steady, old-timer!—Together, now!" rang out Patroclus' silver voice. They went down a few notches more. Bob stopped. There was an utter silence below, for no one had dared call up a word of encouragement. Bob's knees began shaking and trembling under him. He was furious at them; *he* was not cowardly, but these legs undoubtedly *were!* He fought them breathing heavily,

prodding at them with the scornful sarcasm of his will.

"C'mon—le's go!" came Patroclus' voice impatiently. Bob forced himself on down. Ha! That went better! The long series of steps stretched out below; all you had to do was to forget the rest of it and just plant one foot after another right in the notch! Patroclus kept calling out "Hep! Hep! Hep!" and that got them in unison. The thing soon became mechanical. Victory! By the time the last steps were reached Bob was as cool as any of them. They dropped the canoe and he rushed to grab Pat's hand. The slender youth was now mopping his face rapidly and the perspiration was pouring down it. He had gone white, and as Bob gripped his hand he leaned against him, weak, tottering.

Bob put his arm around him supportingly. "Some team, we are, old pal!" he whispered. "Better now? You'll be all right in a minute!" Pat's weight leaned on him heavily. The reaction to his high-strung nature had

come, now that the danger was over and surmounted—yet his was the soaring soul that kept the path for them both, up there!

Both were relieved by the sketch that was now going on up on the trunk. Ulysses was the last one left. He had been industriously lowering packs by a tracking rope and now it was his turn to come down. Old Brains was not taking any chances! He came down backward, like a monkey, on all fours, his feet feeling for the notches below as the Trojans jeered and yelled up unfeeling comments. Once or twice the Brains would sit down altogether, with arms and legs hugging the trunk, when some gust of fear would render him temporarily helpless. They all laughed till they cried, and a dozen hands tore out his shirt when Ulysses arrived in their midst once more. It was about time, for he had, so far, escaped that ignominious ceremony.

"Camp site a leetle way down de backwater," chirped Etienne, dragging his canoe to a muddy landing. "You was lak de Lad-

der Portage, M'sieus?" he asked innocently.

"Simply rippin', dear chap!" grinned His Lordship. "Topping, y' know! But not for my regular daily fare, though! Rather not!"

"I was mak, t'ree, four, tam every season, me," laughed Etienne. "Hey, Nishimi-wog?"

The Indian grinned saturninely.

The fleet started on again, and after about a mile came to a little pine grove with a rivulet and a spring flowing out into the Rocher from one side of it. The place soon hummed with happy voices and the busy strokes of axes. Tents went up; a log fire was built; big pans of biscuits started rising in a reflector baker set before a high-flaming fire of its own, with a straight back wall of small logs.

And, in the midst of this carefree chatter, there came a deep sullen boom—a crash that reverberated through the forest and was echoed from the cliffs that walled in the river!

"*Hein?* Wat was dat?" asked Etienne, cocking his ear.

"Tree falling somewhere," replied Ajax

indifferently and went on driving tent pegs.

But Etienne was not reassured. He went down to the landing and shoved off upstream in the canoe.

After a time they heard his swift paddle strokes coming back. There was so much urgency in them that every one ran down to the landing inquiringly. The guide's eyes were fairly popping out of his head as the canoe shot at full speed toward them.

"Bah gosh, M'sieus!—Mooch bad! De Naskapi was t'row down de Ladder Portage!" he gasped out. "We was trapped, M'sieus!"

"Ugh!" grunted John Charley Nishimiwog, shaking his head solemnly, "now de Naskapi, was coom revenge de White Bear—You was see!"

CHAPTER X

RETRIBUTION

"WHAT do you make of it, Etienne?" asked Bob, anxiously, when the French Canadian had landed and quieted down enough to make his speech intelligible and coherent.

"Heem was a trap," declared Etienne ominously. He stretched out a burly arm down the river. *"Grand Serre*—250 *pied chute à pie!"* he cried, relapsing into French in his excitement.

The Trojans looked to His Lordship for translation, for Etienne was in no state of mind to make himself understood in English.

"My word! I think the balmy idiot means that there is some sort of chasm blocking us to the south," laughed His Lordship. "*Serre*

means a cleft—but a 250-foot drop! I presume the Rocher tumbles down through it for that amazing fall. And of course we can't get out back with that ladder tree gone. Rather neat, that, what? Here's where they'll have the party, I take it," he concluded cheerfully.

Etienne wagged his head and pointed to the walls of cliffs all around them. This was once a huge water-filled gorge, before the Rocher had cut that cleft in the living rock. Its sides were almost perpendicular.

"We no can get out of dis, if de Injuns block de carry around Grand Serre," he insisted.

"Topping!" exploded Lord Jim, while Ajax and Diomed rocked on their toes with the anticipated joys of combat. "So we'll have to fight our way through the blighters, eh?" he asked, delightedly.

Etienne shook his head. "No; dey no shoot. Every wan know everyt'ing in dees co'ntree. Pleece-man, he come. Rope! In-

jun no fool! We was all come dead by leetly accidense—dat's what!"

"Humph!" snorted His Lordship. "Little accident, eh? Well, let 'em try it! We'll spring an accident or two of our own, my word!"

He turned away ruggedly, as if dismissing the subject, and presently Nishimi-wog called them to supper. They ate with less than their usual hilarity, every one discussing what was to be done—to fortify the camp, to move on that night, even to abandon the canoes and try to climb out of the gorge and make their way overland down to civilization.

"No; we stay right here!" declared Lord Jim, when Ulysses had made that crafty proposal. "Fawncy our leaving all our trophies and hiking through these beastly scrags all for a lot of balmy redskins! We'll keep a guard to-night, that's all."

Bob felt that, whatever it was, it would be spectacular and stupendous, that retribution that the Naskapi would take for their shoot-

ing the sacred White Bear. And, to satisfy the pact with the Montaignais, it would at the same time either deliver Nagushwa into their hands or abolish it entirely. Otherwise the thing would lack that completeness of finish that delighted the Indian mind. But what the catastrophe was going to be he could not imagine.

Next morning he knew. Even before daylight (his was the four-to-eight watch) his nostrils became aware of a pungent, acrid odor. At first he thought it was the combination of their own fire and vagrant winds blowing about camp, but his forefinger told him that the wind was still blowing steadily from the north down the vast gorge in which they were camped. No; it was more than that! He knew that the woods were as dry as tinder and that the moss and needles crackled under foot when he walked. By dawn he had learned the appalling truth—*fire* was the weapon the tribesmen were going to use! The first faint streaks of dawn revealed a

thin haze out over the Rocher, and a mist of it was hanging and swaying along the lower walls of the cliffs. He roused out the camp with his yell of discovery.

Etienne and Nishimi-wog bounded out of their lean-to at his cry. One look set the French-Canadian into transports of excitement.

"*Sacré!* De woods was all burn of it!" he yelled. "Coom, M'sieu Bob!—we go look!" He motioned to the canoe and they got in and shoved her out into the stream. One glance back up the stream toward the bare cliff of the Ladder Portage told the story. Gone was the huge notched trunk that had lain there for so many seasons, and in its place a dense cloud of smoke rose from the woods below and covered the heavens with a huge pall. And it was bent over toward them by the wind as it topped the cliff!

"*Mon Dieu*!—we was all be corp!" grunted Etienne, shoving the canoe ashore with a single paddle stoke.

"I say—rippin', isn't it?" grinned His Lordship, as they told him the news. "They're smokin' us out like badgers! Shall we run for it, boys?"

They agreed that there was little time to waste. The tents came down in double time and a hasty coffee and bacon was downed while the packs were being made up. In twenty minutes more the canoes were loaded and the whole fleet fled down the Rocher.

"How far is it to this Grand Serre?" they heard Lord Jim ask Nishimi-wog as his canoe forged past them under the Indian's steady stroke.

"Quite leetle ways—mebbe t'ree mile. Plainty bad water; down tree, shallows," grunted the Indian.

"We should have gone out last night—but I hated to run from the beggars," replied His Lordship, cheerfully, and that was the only word of regret that they ever heard him utter.

The backwater soon gave on a chattering

rapids. Down it they plunged and rolled in single file, following Etienne's lead, as he knew the channel. They were congratulating each other on having left the fire behind, when, right in front of them, in a narrow sluice of the river, a tiny wisp of smoke arose suddenly and a whole spruce burst into a pyre of flame, the smoke from it ascending in a tall column. His Lordship's express rifle banged out twice, and then the canoes raced down into it without chance to pause.

"Whee!—Duck, Pat!" yelled Bob stopping a second to turn up his collar. Blazing wisps of spruce twigs fell all about them, and for an instant the heat and smoke hovered over them in a stifling wave. Then the canoe shot on down into clear water. Behind them the underbrush and the contingent spruces caught fire and a roaring crackling blaze filled the river, its welts of smoke chasing them on down the Rocher.

"If they can manage to get far enough ahead to start that *again,* before we get there,

we'll be trapped for fair," said Bob. "Paddle, Pat—give it to her!"

They drove on after the others The same idea seemed to have overtaken the whole party, for the canoes went on at breakneck speed. Somewhere, up in the brush, invisible, gliding along like snakes, the Indians were paralleling them. It needed only a delay of some kind for them to be lost indeed!

And the river was ready with that delay. Two miles further on they overtook the other canoes, now all spread out over a flat and rippling shallows where the entire river had widened out, combing through bowlders and sliding in troubled wavelets over pebbly shallows. Their own keel grated against bottom almost at once. It was a case of choose your own route and get out and wade without delay. Instantly Bob was over the side, his tracking line in hand while Patroclus at stern held the canoe from swinging and guided her after Bob's lead. They splashed through cold water until their knees ached with the

unaccustomed movement; they grounded on rocks and cursed; they picked the canoe up bodily and dragged her over pebbles, unmindful of ominous rips in the canvas. It was essential to get on, and they were falling behind!

Eventually came the blessed deep waters again. The river gathered itself together and disappeared around a bend, marked by a huge escarpment of granite rock weathered and scoured by thousands of spring floods. A deep boom came from beyond it, and one after another they saw the leading canoes gather headway and disappear at terrific speed around the curve.

"Rapids coming, drop of thirty feet—I remember seeing it on the map at Roberval!" cried Bob, paddling hard. Of all the rapids they ever shot that was the one which would remain longest in their memories! In less than a hundred yards the whole river dropped thirty feet, swirling down in one huge, foam-flecked wave, something like that big fellow

they had seen on La Rivière du Nord; only this one went down at a long, dizzy slant. There was nothing to strike against; they got an impression of furious speed, a sudden thought of the drowning that awaited them if the canoe should get turned sidewise and upset; a determination to paddle like fury and keep steerage way on her, a wild impulse to screech like Piutes, a sudden dive through huge gouged and curling whitecaps at the foot of the chute, a wetting that knocked the breath out of them—and then stillness, and a period of laughing relief when there was nothing to do but joke nervously and bail out the water that had been shipped.

The leading canoe disappeared around a narrow bend. Bob and Patroclus were busy paddling hard to keep themselves from being flung bodily into the spruces by the current, but once in the bend a discouraging vista opened up ahead. The gorge had narrowed in here, and the tall timber growing on dry ground had come in close to the banks.

Dozens of dead trees had fallen across the stream at every height and angle, and under them went the deep waters of the river, swift, silent, scouring along at a terrific rate but so deep that they could not see bottom. Ahead the other three canoes were already in various states of upheaval. His Lordship and Nishimi-wog were standing on a trunk, hauling their canoe over it between them by its gunwales. Etienne's birchbark was just ahead of them and the three in it were trying to squeeze her under a tree trunk which crossed not two feet above the stream. Ajax and Diomed were stuck hard aground on a submerged stub which held their keel and defied furious paddling and much belaboring of each other with trenchant sarcasms.

They came out on clear water at last. Around another bend they found the whole party camped on a big flat rock with the canoes hauled up and the kettle boiling. Bob remonstrated as they ran ashore.

"I thought we were trying to beat them to

the Grand Serre, sir," he said to Lord Jim, not offering to get out of his canoe.

"Oh, well!" shrugged His Lordship. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it, I fawncy." He seemed entirely indifferent, self-confident, and went on worrying at a succulent venison steak broiled on a green stick and fresh from the fire which John Charley had proffered him.

Bob gave him up and went ashore to join them at lunch without a word. It takes your Englishman to sit down in a tight place, unmoved, unafraid, entirely confident of the ultimate outcome! In any event, by all means, it was necessary to eat and drink! But while His Lordship may have dealt with Hindus, Malays and Kaffirs, Bob felt that he had no conception of the American Indian as an antagonist.

"We was carry around Le Piège rapeed next; den coom Le Grand Serre an' we go over de mountain," said Etienne, as they set out again after lunch. Le Piège! The

Trap!—sinister name! thought Bob. "Why is it called Le Piège, Etienne?" he asked.

"Dey was beeg falls in de middly of heem. Man get in dere, he no come out alive!" explained the guide. "Leetly carry, though."

The "leetly carry" was a rough one they found out when they came to make it. It had not been cleared in many years and through the dry bush they had fairly to force the canoes. In fact, after getting lost several times, they found that the trail was sure to be where the bushes grew thickest.

"Now you was see de Grand Serre!" said Etienne, when the canoes were finally assembled and packed at the lower landing. Above them gushed out the Rocher through a rock defile, still muttering and grumbling after its tumble over the falls. The eddying waters swirled by and slewed the canoes about almost unmanageably as they took the current. Out from under the canopy of green they swung—and then every man laid aside his paddle to gaze ahead in sheer amazement!

It was a mighty scene that lay before them! Here the high cliff walls of the gorge circled around in a kind of amphitheater, unscalable, ending in a massive wall that stretched flat across their path half a mile below. Splitting it in twain from top to bottom was a narrow cleft, worn by the Rocher during the long centuries, and even at that distance they could hear the mutter of the high falls that marked its headlong rush down the Grand Serre. Two hundred and fifty feet drop! What *must* that lower pool be like on the other side of that huge barrier!

Etienne pointed ahead to the right, where a tree-clad shoulder filled in a corner of the amphitheater to one side of the Serre. "Dah was de trail oop out of dis gorge. We make heem to-night, an' camp down below in de co'ntry of ma people," he announced.

A quicker stroke drove all the canoes on headlong. Here was the place! No man could get out of here save over that wooded shoulder. If that was held by the Indians

and all this walled valley set on fire— Far up on a hill, a shrill yell made Bob check and pause for a moment.

"What was that, Pat?" he cried, a shock of almost terror thrilling through him. "Hear it?"

"Yes—there it goes again!" replied Patroclus, listening intently. It was repeated, much nearer them; then from right up on the hillside above them; then back of them, and on back, clear to Le Piège!

Immediately thin rifts of smoke began to weave out of the forest. There were a dozen of them, wherever they looked. Then came the roaring crackle of flames and the whole forest under the cliffs burst into sheets of fire. Trapped! It was a gorgeous stupendous pitfall! Etienne was yelling like a madman, paddling his heart out, with the others following him in one last spurt to reach the Grand Serre Portage in time. They might as well have saved their efforts, for at that end the whole hillside burst suddenly ablaze as if lighted in a dozen places at once. The

Indians had no intention of holding it themselves; fire could do that. Smoke came billowing down over the reaches of the Rocher, and behind it came a steady crackle as of musketry, and reports like cannon cracks of green trees bursting with the intense heat. A high wind got up from nowhere, filling their eyes with acrid smoke, covering them with blazing, falling leaves. The fire made it, creating its own draught in that narrow cañon. Before their eyes a whole tree top burst into vivid flame, exploded with the steam of bursting sap, and soared high on the wind to drop hissing into the river.

They had now huddled together for mutual assistance. The river was bearing them steadily down under the walls of the Grand Serre. Etienne and Nishimi-wog were yelling and gesticulating, trying to make themselves understood in the intolerable roar of flames all around them. A deep rumble that underlay it all like a bass organ pipe told the others what he meant. Somewhere, right

near them, hidden in the smoke, the river was gliding on into the maw of the Serre—and they must get ashore without delay or be swept into it!

Coughing and fighting through the murk, they drove the canoes across the treacherous current. Bob saw Etienne and Antoine suddenly leap overboard in four feet of water. Ulysses jumped out and they all hastily pulled out the duffel and slung it ashore to where a dim bank of pebbles could be seen under the smoke. Then the three, at a sign from Etienne, turned the canoe over in the water and Ulysses and Antoine dove under it, Etienne remaining outside to hold it and steady it.

The others had caught the idea and were following suit. Under their canoes was the only place where man could survive this. The pool itself was already like a furnace and the smoke impossible to breathe. Bob could see dim figures working like mad all around him, dim objects hurtling through the

air to land on the beach, and then the long bulk of a canoe rising on men's heads to lower carefully on to the water. Patroclus had already cast their loads ashore from his end. Heaving his pack, a set of caribou horns, and a wad of fur out of the canoe, he signaled to Bob and they jumped out over opposite sides simultaneously, raised the canoe over their heads and lowered it to the water surface.

Inside it was nearly dark. Indistinctly Bob could see Patroclus' head rising above the water and reaching nearly up to the canoe bottom.

"How's everything, pal? Did you get burnt any?" he called, his voice a hollow rumble under the canoe.

Pat nodded. "Better not talk much. We've got to economize our air. Gee, it's hot in here!"

"I'll go out and splash water on the canoe bottom a bit—get a good grip on her, now, or we'll get carried off by the current!"

Bob swung out from under the canoe and

came up with his head just out of water.

Stealthy currents tugged at his legs, but he could hold bottom well enough. Steam was rising in a cloud from the bottom of the canoe and he slapped water in spurts over it. Ashore he could see nothing but a black pall, shot through with red tongues. Blazing branches and twigs came down all around him in showers, the hiss of their quenching rapid as raindrops. He found that by lowering his nose to an inch above the water he could find air that could be breathed; at any level higher, he was choked with the smoke fumes at once.

The heat seemed getting even more intense, Bob felt, as he maintained his vigil, and he wondered if it would not be worth while to risk a crossing to the opposite shore. But that would be futile, he soon realized. He had but to look over there to see lines of bright flames shining through the murk. It was all afire, for the flames had leaped the river. Then a sudden gust of wind drove vast sheets of flame right down over him. A murderous

crackle of small branches taking fire roared out at him and he ducked hastily under the canoe.

"How goes it?—Getting pretty close in here," Patroclus' voice greeted him. "We're using up all our air."

"Terrific! The worst is going on right above us now," announced Bob. "After a bit we'd better lift her up and clean out this old air. There's fresh air along the surface——"

A terrific drubbing on the canoe bottom above them interrupted him. Outside, the whole forest was evidently falling over on them in a wall of burning brands, judging from these sounds. Then came the boom of some heavy object that smote the roof of their canoe like a drum. With it came a rending and tearing sound of split fibers. A black and smoking stub jutted through over their heads. The boys watched it, paralyzed for a moment, as water began to spurt through, quenching it and falling like a spigot tap on the level surface of the water under their canoe.

"Gorry, we'll be drowned now!—I believe the whole canoe's under water—it *must* be!" coughed Bob. "Let's get out from under."

"Might as well," chattered Patroclus. I'm nearly frozen. I'd just as leave be burned for a while."

Side by side they wiggled out from under the gunwale and came sputtering to the surface. Dense black smoke hung over everything, but dimly they could see the backs of the other canoes like giant turtles steaming in the heat. Across their own canoe, entirely submerging it, lay a charred tree trunk, its upper side still blazing.

"Get hold of it and heave her off!" choked Bob, trying to breathe through his wet sleeve in the overpowering murk.

They grabbed the outer end and heaved up with all their strength. Instantly the canoe shot out, like a fruit-seed under some huge thumb—and the perverse demons that ruled the fates willed that it should dart with the speed of a driven arrow out into the stream.

The two youths grabbed it and hung on. The next instant they realized what was going to happen, for the canoe began to move faster and faster as it shot for the maw of the Grand Serre!

Bob reached out and gripped Patroclus' hand. "Good-by, old chum—save yourself if you can," he yelled in the slender lad's ear.

"Left—left—swim off to the left!" shouted Patroclus, in return. He was farther ahead and, keeping his wits about him, had already abandoned the canoe. The walls of the Serre loomed up black and enormous before them. They were gliding swiftly and surely through an impenetrable gloom, toward a dull hollow rumble that rose out of unseen depths. Then Bob saw Patroclus rise high out of water and threw both arms around a dim columnar object that jutted out of the chasm. It turned out to be a tree trunk that at some time or other had pitched down headlong here, to land on the first stage of the ladder of falls in the Serre and lodge there, jutting up out of the

cleft. It was jammed firmly to one side and held there by the rush of the waters. Bob snatched for Pat's shoulders as he himself was being swept by, clawed fiercely, climbed up and got hold of a branch stub. Their canoe slid on past—on down—*boom!—brrrumm!—boom, boom, boom!* Sounds of it striking terrace after terrace came echoing up through the cleft; then all further news of it was lost.

Again Bob and Patroclus gripped hands, without a word. Their lives were safe, for the present. . . . Looking down into the cleft, Bob was surprised to find that he could see clearly. The air was good here; for a strong draught induced by the fire came up the Serre.

"Hey, Pat—look down! Say, we can climb down the trunk and stand up in the pool down there—it's a dandy place! Say, I'm going to get the others!" he cried, as one idea led to another and at last he reached the big thought of all.

At once he let himself down into the eddy behind the tree top and groped his way along

the rock wall. Soon his feet found bottom and he crouched, his nose close to the water, his feet wading on bottom following the shore line. Presently he came to the canoes again. Little spurts of water dashing over them and a head outside told him that they were still working, still enduring the heat and smoke, still keeping the canoes from taking fire. The worst of it was over now, but it would be many hours before the air would be fit to breathe.

Bob bent down over the first head. It was His Lordship's, cool and indomitable as ever.

"How's it going?" he shouted.

"A little bit of all right, ye know—but cold, beastly cold! We're all nearly chilled to death in this water. I'd get up if it didn't choke me."

"Sink the canoe and come on—I've found a place to go," said Bob.

His Lordship reached in and pulled out Antoine and Etienne. "Turn her over and

sink her under water," he ordered, "M'sieu Bob's found a place."

While they were at it Bob warned the others. Soon the canoes were all sunk and anchored by their track lines and the whole party set off, swimming low and following Bob. One by one they reached the top of the tree trunk jutting up out of the Serre, and one by one they climbed down, to gather in the first pool. High overhead on both sides towered the giant walls of the Serre, but it was fresh and clear in here—a vast change after the fuming smoke of the upper river.

"I say, ye know—topping this—isn't it?"—*rather!*" burbled His Lordship, looking around happily. "In an hour or so we shall be going up there, all sereneo! Bob, old thing!—our very best!" he congratulated.

"Gosh, Pat—there's our canoe!" yelled Bob, suddenly, peering down through the Serre. Around their knees boiled and swirled the water of the Rocher River; above them bellowed the cascade of the first chute; but, far

down through the cleft could be seen a strip of green forest and a fragment of the lower pool. Across it had floated their canoe, bottom up and in the grip of a whirlpool, but still afloat.

CHAPTER XI

ST. CÉSARE

IT was an hour later when, with chattering teeth and shivering bodies, the Trojans decided that the heat and the smoke of the upper valley would be preferable to the cold and watery tumult around them at the foot of that great tree trunk which lay jammed in Le Grand Serre. One by one they climbed up it again and crawled along the rock face to shore. The wind blowing up the Serre had cleared their end of the valley considerably. Trees and duff smoldered, and there were still patches of fire high up on the cliff opposite. A great black valley of desolation spread as far back as Le Piège rapids; beyond that the eternal green of virgin forest.

The Indians had not destroyed so very much of their territory, a mere strip of it when you came to consider the vast area that was theirs, still free from the lumberman's ax and the pernicious pulp mill. His Lordship remarked as much, cheerful and unmoved as ever, when they all set about raising the canoes and searching the shore for what was left of their duffel.

The Naskapi had failed in their revenge, but how close to it they had come, the blackened antlers, shriveled and tortured hides, packs that fell into charred pieces of cloth at the touch told them.

"We moos hurry on down to St. Césare, M'sieus," declared Etienne, shaking his head over the ruins. "Not mooch grub; no blanket; moos do heem in wan day, mebbe."

Still, there *were* a few serviceable blankets left, those that had been folded and put on the under side of a pack the fire had not charred. For these a set of tump straps were made up by Etienne and Nishimi-wog. It was the

pack that they themselves used mostly in their work as *coureur de bois.* They first cut a broad forehead strap eighteen inches long from the ruined hides, and to each end of this strap they fastened pieces of tracking line about eight feet long. Spreading these out on a blanket about two feet apart, its ends were folded in over the lines. On this all the food and utensils needed to make up a pack were heaped, and then the whole was rolled into a bundle. Pulling on the lines shirred the ends of the bundle in tight, and the lines were then crossed and tied as in an ordinary package. Picking it up by the tump strap, the pack could be heaved up on one's back and and the strap adjusted over the forehead so as almost to balance it on the shoulders.

Up over the trail started the canoes and packers. It was a scorched and smoking hillside up which it led in steep zigzags. Stumps still blazed sulkily; the indescribable odor of a duff fire filled the air.

"We'll leave this desolation to our Indian

friends," said His Lordship cheerily. "I fawncy they've all gone back north now, the Naskapi swine, don'tyeknow! as for the Montaignais and Nagushwa we shall see them at St. Césare, shawn't we?"

Indeed not a sign nor a sound of Indians was to be seen; once having set the fire—and failed—the Naskapi apparently had not dared do more. It was not the Indian way to incur any penalties themselves by creating direct evidence. So far no one had even laid eyes on a single Naskapi in all this, they recalled. The Indians had been too wily for that!

Up on the ridge they got their first view of civilization, the first in nearly a month. Below them, after a few more miles of wilderness, the Rocher wound down through a placid *habitant* country, all cut into long narrow farms fronting on the river, each with its little stone house and barn. This ridge marked the southern boundary of the Montaignais Reservation.

"Good-by, you blankety-binged Naskapi!" roared Ajax sardonically, as they started down. "You gave us a fine party—but it didn't work!"

Not a sound; not a single derisive yell, answered him. The silent and smoky valley alone spoke the anger of the red men.

Down at the shore of the lower pool, where it cascaded out of the Grand Serre, they came upon Bob's canoe, stranded on a stump. It had come down that fearful ladder, light, borne on the tossing waves of the river, practically unscathed except for some torn strips of canvas and some broken ribs. A few tacks and a little melted canoe glue repaired the canvas enough to float Bob and Patroclus down after the others to where a huge fire glowed in a grove of pines, the last outpost of the forest before civilization would be reached. They spent the evening drying out clothes and then turned in to sleep like logs. It had been a day!

The run to St. Césare next day was uninteresting. *Habitants* and cows stared at them from the banks with equal lack of interest or comprehension. To the natives the battered party was just Etienne and his partner Nishimi-wog, bringing out another crowd of "sports," with the inevitable heads. The two guides were continually calling *"Bo' jou! —Bo' jou!"* in return to greetings from shore, and chaffing with the *habitants* as they passed, for they knew every one on the river.

After the last bend, the Hudson's Bay Post of St. Césare came in sight, a little rambling collection of log and stone houses, with quaint dormer windows set in the roofs, while over it towered its stone church, built in the form of a cross, with slender, pointed steeples rising from gable and apse. Bob looked at the village with keen curiosity, for it was here that Nagushwa, the other mystery of the trip, would come out. They had escaped the Naskapi; here was the headquarters of the Montaignais, and here they would be able to

question the Curé of the village and probe the mystery of Nagushwa and its relation to the Montaignais.

A vociferous welcome awaited them at the Post, dogs and children running along the bank while braves and squaws came out of their tepees in the Indian quarter to watch them go by. Every one, even the stolid red men, seemed heading towards the landing to meet them. Etienne sang a deep-chested chanson of the North, waving his paddle and calling to relatives of every shade and description as they swept on down the Rocher to the landing.

But a shriller cry arose from the women and children as they recognized Antoine in Etienne's canoe. "Antwine! Antwine!" they shrieked. "He comes! He comes!" they called, and "Nagushwa! Nagushwa!" shrieked the Indian children.

Bob wondered what all the excitement was about, but his thoughts were quite occupied just then in noting the queer costumes of

the people of this forgotten corner of the world. Men, blue-shirted and gray-trousered, with gay moccasins on their feet and belted with red and blue silk sashes shouted welcomes at Etienne. *Habitant* girls, the wind blowing their calicoes about their comely figures, jostled and crowded each other as their shrill voices called out to Antoine. And back of them all stalked the Indians, tall and silent, wrapped in red blankets or with white, blue-banded ones thrown over their shoulders. There seemed an unusual number of them, Bob thought, and some looked as wild as if just out of the forest. These Montaignais seemed a different breed from the usual old-clothes Indian one generally finds around a Hudson Bay Post.

"*Ah—mon poupa et mon maman*!" choked Etienne, springing out of the canoe the moment it touched the dock and flinging himself upon an aged couple who broke forth from the crowd. Antoine was scarcely behind him, leaving Ulysses to hold the canoe.

He was in the old *habitant* woman's arms in a flash, while Etienne's burly embrace held them all in a most tempestuous reunion.

The Trojans and His Lordship waited in the canoes until the family greetings should have abated somewhat. Just then the crowd parted respectfully and the Curé came down to the dock in company with a grizzled Scotchman, the Factor of the Post. Bob observed the Curé with something of awe. It was difficult to realize the churchly power of this man, who held the very souls and lives of his simple people in the hollow of his hand. But it was all benevolent power, Bob was sure, for his serene old face shone welcomes and blessings under the curled black hat of his priesthood. His black gown swept about him and the white bands of his clerical collar blew about in the never-ceasing winds, as he and the Factor joined the Bissette family reunion.

"Nagushwa? Have you got it, my son?" the Curé asked Etienne.

"Oh, aye!" put in the Factor, his voice worried and exasperated. "Yon bit baubee has been at its deevil's work again, we hear! Give it to the Curé, Etienne, and let's hae an end o't."

Etienne brought out the gold ornament. "Take it—it is death! I never want to see it again!" he said, thrusting the gold ornament into the Curé's hands.

The latter put his hand benignly on the *habitant's* shoulder. "It is better so, my son. We shall put it back in the crypt, where it can do no more harm."

"I say, M'sieu le Curé," called out His Lordship from the canoe, "might I examine it before you do so?"

The Factor turned and eyed him sternly. "Aweel an' aweel, young mon—and why?" he asked.

"I fawncy I have a right to," retorted Lord Jim. "This Nagushwa is called also the Locket of St. Dié, is it not?"

"Aye, and what then?" inquired the Factor

with the rugged skepticism of the Scotsman.

"Nothing, only *I* am a St. Dié," said His Lordship. "James Neville, Lord St. Dié, ye know."

"Oh!—I beg Your Lordship's pardon!" the Factor exclaimed. "You are the Lord of St. Dié? I have mail for Your Lordship—go, Pierre Cadotte, and get it, quick!—of course Your Lordship may handle the locket, 'twill be verra intereestin', I'm thinkin', for a real St. Dié to see it."

The Curé had been standing looking at them uncertainly all this time, with the Locket of St. Dié in his hand. The Indians had gathered near him in a compact knot, and Bob could hear the muttered whisper, "Nagushwa! Nagushwa! Nagushwa!" passing among them like the croaking of frogs. They had no particular respect for Lord Jim, and his nobility, but desire for possession of the locket now fairly blazed in their eyes. The very sight of it seemed to inflame them.

"You are a St. Dié?" said the Curé at

length, regarding Lord Jim with a mild curiosity in his eyes.

"Rawther!" grinned His Lordship. "Might I have a look at this balmy gewgaw of my respected family, then, Father?" he suggested, a touch of irony in his tones.

"My children, we shall go to the church," declared the Curé after a moment of further hesitation. "This is a very weighty matter and not lightly to be undertaken. For you, young sir," he added, turning to Lord Jim, "as you are a St. Dié, I have something of special interest there to show you."

He turned and led the way to the little stone church. Etienne and Antoine, with the grandparents, followed him, surrounded by most of the *habitants* of the place, all chattering volubly in French. Behind them crowded the Indians in a compact mass, never letting themselves get more than a few feet behind the Curé's back, never letting their gaze wander from the coveted Nagushwa in his hands. The Trojans and the Factor followed, en-

gaged in the usual formalities of introductions. His Lordship was looking over his home mail abstractedly. So far nothing had been said about their adventures with the Naskapi. The boys had tacitly agreed to let Lord Jim tell that, if he should feel so disposed.

The little church at once filled to overflowing. The Curé excused himself for a moment and presently returned out of his private oratory, bearing an old volume with him.

"Lord St. Dié," he said, "here is the record of the French side of your family. This volume is one of the Jesuit Relations, by Father Le Jeune, who was one of the first to labor among the Montaignais. You may read it over at your leisure. The main facts of interest to you are these: The first French St. Dié came to Canada with the Sieur de Roberval, the original governor of our Canada. This St. Dié became a *coureur de bois,* as many young French noblemen of that time did. He established a trading post with the

Montaignais on what is now Lake St. John. He named it 'Roberval,' in honor of our first governor. This St. Dié was called Pierre le Loup by the Indians and was killed in a fight with the wild Naskapi to the north." His Lordship grinned enigmatically at that and the Trojans felt, too, that they had cause to remember the Naskapi! "He left among his effects this gold locket," went on the Curé. "As he had no heirs, it fell, in the rude division of property at that time, to a friend, a fellow *coureur de bois,* Gaston de Bissette, the ancestor of the present Bissettes, of Etienne and little Antoine, here, who wears it as the present-day heir. This much Father Le Jeune relates. Now, what kin are you, my lord, to Pierre de St. Dié, the *coureur de bois*, may I ask?" concluded the Curé.

Lord Jim thought a while. "Of course I know the book of the St. Diés, the English family, by heart," he began. "The first English St. Dié was a younger son of that old Marquis de St. Dié whom Louis XIII

and Richelieu threw into prison, beheaded, and confiscated all his estates. The older son, we know, fled to Canada with Roberval, at the same time that my ancestor escaped to England. I fawncy this St. Dié of Father Le Jeune's relation was that same elder son, ye know—wasn't he?"

"Aweel, that settles it!" broke in the Factor, abruptly. "The locket is really Your Lordship's," he bowed. "According to common law, as representative of the younger brother. And, further, aught else that these Bissettes may have treasured of the French St. Dié's belongings are yours, too, sir. They go to the younger son and his descendants, that Frenchman having no direct heirs."

"No!" bellowed a big buck among the Indians who had been listening avidly. "No good! Nagushwa, heem belong to de Montaignais!" he yelled. "My old man say dat Pierre le Loup have a writin' in dat Nagushwa w'ich geev heem all de land, by de great white king. Frontenac geev *us* de land.

Writin' say so! No good dat Montaignais lands be geev now to dis white man, who nevvair leev in dis co'ntree, nevvair see heem—*wah!*" he grunted furiously, pointing to Lord Jim.

The Factor snorted impatiently. A mutter of intense interest went up among the *habitants* at the Montaignais chief's words. At last the secret of why the Indians had always tried to get possession of Nagushwa was out! As for Lord Jim, he looked at the Indian chief dumbfounded.

"My word!" he exclaimed. "Their traditions last as long as our records! Fawncy! —I presume Roberval must have given Pierre de St. Dié a seignory in the name of the king, though. And, in the usual vague boundaries of these seignories, it probably gave him everything from the St. Lawrence north to Labrador. And, of course, he kept it in this old medieval locket—there is a record of some such deadly ornament being in the family. I've read it somewhere."

"The tradition of the Seignory of the Rocher River is more persistent among my poor people, the Montaignais, than in any deed of record, for there is none," replied the Curé. "Your Lordship's ancestral uncle may have said something about it to a Montaignais chief of that period; anyway, the locket, or Nagushwa, Medicine Gold, as the Indians call it, has been kept here in the church vaults for most of its history because generation after generation, whenever returned to the Bissettes, the Indians try to steal it. Every Indian who has taken it has evidently tried to open it and been killed. No *habitant* has ever tried to open it because of the seal of the Jesuits, 'A.M.D.G.,' on the inner cover."

"My word!" exclaimed His Lordship. "Let *us* open it then and see."

"Ah, no! Please don't, Lord Jeem—please!" begged Antoine, childish terror in his shrill tones. "De church say 'No.' It was keel you!"

"Fawncy!" chuckled His Lordship. "It's

mine, though—he looked to the Curé for permission. "It just wants a little caution, kiddie—never fear." He had drawn his hunting knife, and, as they all watched, he pressed with the point of it on the little gold knob that held the inner cover. It moved to one side, disclosing a tiny hole in the cover. Instantly came a sharp metallic click and a small needle shot up. The knife point slipped off the knob, and immediately the needle disappeared and the knob snapped back into place over the hole again. But it left a small watery drop on the cover.

"Poison. Cobra, I'll bet!" ejaculated His Lordship. "Virulent forever, least drop. He who opens me dies! Rummy old goldsmiths those were in medieval times, eh?" He dipped the point of the knife in the tear of liquid and looked around for something to test it on. There was a scuffle as the crowd pushed back from him. Presently a small mangy cur, of the sort that are always a pest around Hudson Bay posts, was passed over

the shoulders of the crowd. Lord Jim gave him a small jab with the knife. Almost at once he began to shudder and shake with convulsions, and died on the chapel floor shortly after. A deep breath of fascinated horror went through the crowd of *habitants*. The Indians nodded and grunted understandingly. The secret of Nagushwa was plain to them now! Bob noted more than one hand stealthily reaching toward it to snatch it away. They were not afraid of it any more.

"Precisely!" cried His Lordship, looking around. "The thief puts his thumb on the knob to open it; needle darts up and wounds him in the thumb and so kills him—one little touch of cobra poison, y'see."

"Yes, dat is so," corroborated the chief, "our people come dead, an' de arm is swollen. So we find heem."

"Here, Ulysses, *you're* always keen about these mysteries," said Lord Jim. "Help me, this time—I'll press the knob again, while you pry up the cover."

Again he held the lethal knob aside. Ulysses dug the point of his knife under the cover edge. With a small *pong!* the cover flew up and on its under side they saw fastened the small but ingenious steel poison mechanism of that ancient French or Florentine jeweler. Tightly folded in the base they found a yellow packet of old onion-skin parchment.

"Of course!" cried His Lordship, reading the ancient French penscript on the parchment. "Deed of the Seignory of the Rocher River—and all the country north to the sea—to my respected ancestral uncle, Pierre de St. Dié! Signed by old Roberval himself. See? —*As* might be expected! Witness it, Trojans!"

Bob did not quite understand the flippant, railing sarcasm in His Lordship's tones as he handed over the parchment and they all read the ancient French script and the quaint almost illegible scrawl which meant the name "Roberval." But the Montaignais chief

scowled at it, his brow black with passion.

"No!" he thundered. "Heap lie! Montaignais own dese lands! Frontenac geev dem to de Montaignais. Dere is writin' say so! We Keel! Keel! Keel!"

He drew back, his hand grasping a knife under his blanket, Bob was sure, while his followers pressed around him in a compact knot. The Trojans and all the whites gathered back of His Lordship. They were unarmed, except for the hunting knife that each wore, but they expected to do no more than defend themselves if the Indians attacked.

"Listen, Chief," smiled His Lordship cheerfully. "Do you think, for one moment, that I'd take your forests or sell them to white men! They'd lumber them until there was no more virgin wilderness left; they'd pulp them until nothing but bare rocks remained; they'd put in a turbine up in the Grand Serre and a power station. My word, they haven't sense enough to leave themselves one single spot of wild country for recreation, in their

beastly greed for money and profits! Don't I know my people! Haven't I seen it, in Pahang, in Burma, in East Africa! Wherever they get hold of the land, no matter how, they take it! This old sheet may not be valid, in view as you just now said of Frontenac's later deed, but I'm going to make it so—*now!* Watch, Chief!"

He ripped the parchment into pieces before them, and then, piling the strips on the floor, he lit a match and touched it off. Flames and a small column of smoke arose, and the deed of the Seignory of the Rocher was but a pile of ashes which scattered in the draughts of the church.

"There! Go, Chief!—I'll come hunting in your territory again, some day—shan't I?" laughed His Lordship merrily.

A huge coppery grin broke on the face of the Montaignais. "My yoong brother shall be welcome—Mooch!—Always!" he replied with grave dignity, and then without a word he turned and his braves followed him on their

way back to the forest which was now theirs forever.

"You have done well, my son," said the Curé gently. "It is a providence of *Le Bon Dieu* that brought you, a St. Dié, here at this time." He handed him back the Locket of St. Dié which he had been holding.

"Is there a jeweler in the village?" asked His Lordship. "No? Your blacksmith will do as well—have him remove the—ah—serpent's tooth, from this bauble, and let it be given to Antoine. I want you to have it to remember us by, my boy," he smiled at the *habitant* lad. "Shall we be going, Trojans?"

He led the way out into the village. The sun was setting, and by the time their trophies and duffel had been brought up to the Curé's house it was dark and the rosy fingers of the northern lights were stealing over the sky. Save for the occasional lowing of cattle all was still. Far off down the valley came the distant bell of a locomotive pulling into La Tuque.

"Gad!—I hate to hear that, don't you, boys? Back from beauty and freedom to work and turmoil, that bell is calling us! I shall leave that fire scorch on Old Plow-Handles' antlers, though, my word! What memories! . . . No word of that fire to these people, though! It would only bring more trouble on the Indians."

But it was John Charley Nishimi-wog who had the last word. Since His Lordship had done justice to his own people, the Montaignais, he had regarded him as a sort of demi-god.

"But you was coom back, some day, Lord Jeem," he said huskily, "and you too, ma boys! For genteelmen *coureur de bois,* you was de *best* dat I ever had in ma can-noe —sure 'bout dat!"

(1)

THE END

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